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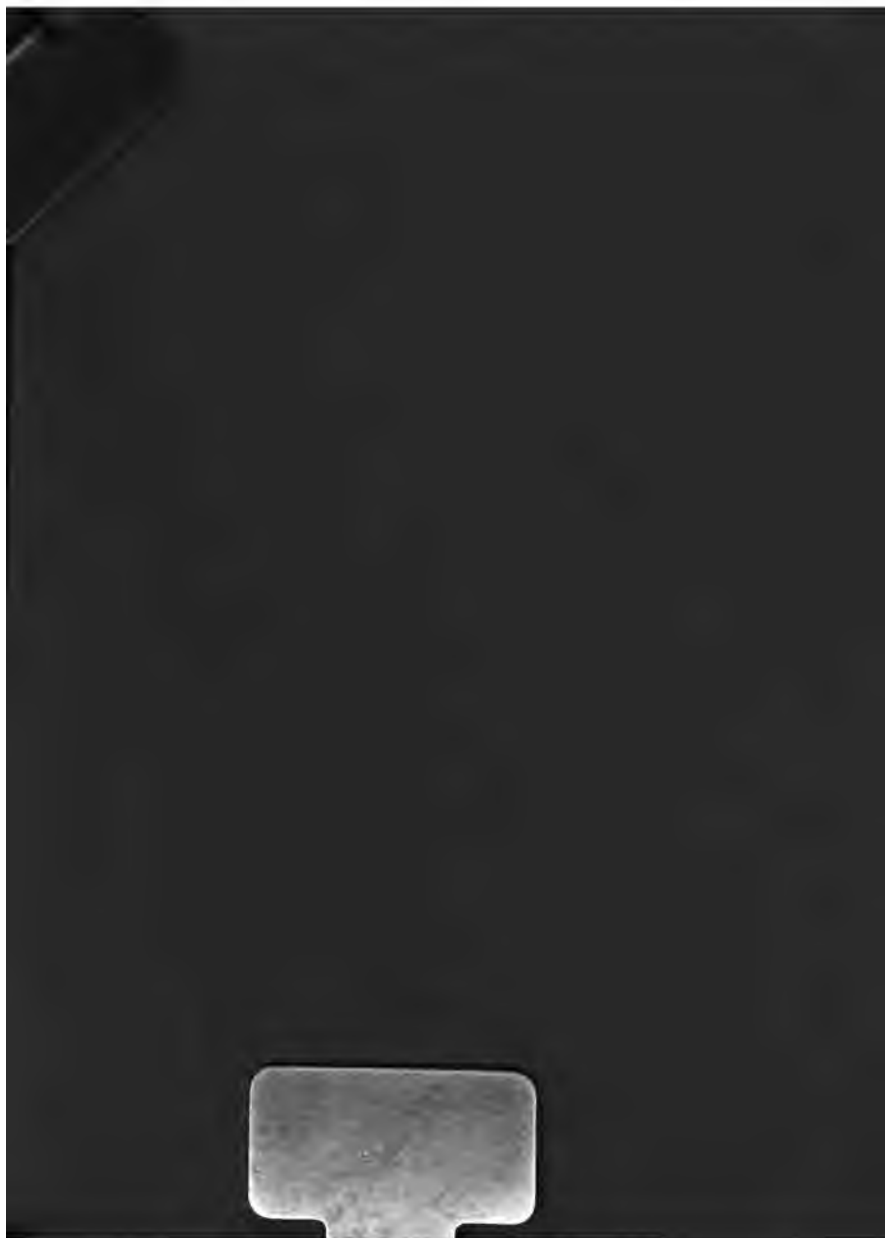
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the 'information' and 'communication' fields. The 'information' field is defined as:

...the study of the nature, creation, organisation, storage, retrieval, dissemination and use of information, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of information and its use. (p. 1)

The 'communication' field is defined as:

...the study of the nature, creation, organisation, storage, retrieval, dissemination and use of communication, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of communication and its use. (p. 1)

The 'information science' field is defined as:

...the study of the nature, creation, organisation, storage, retrieval, dissemination and use of information and communication, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of information and communication and their use. (p. 1)

The 'information studies' field is defined as:

...the study of the nature, creation, organisation, storage, retrieval, dissemination and use of information and communication, and the study of the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of information and communication and their use. (p. 1)

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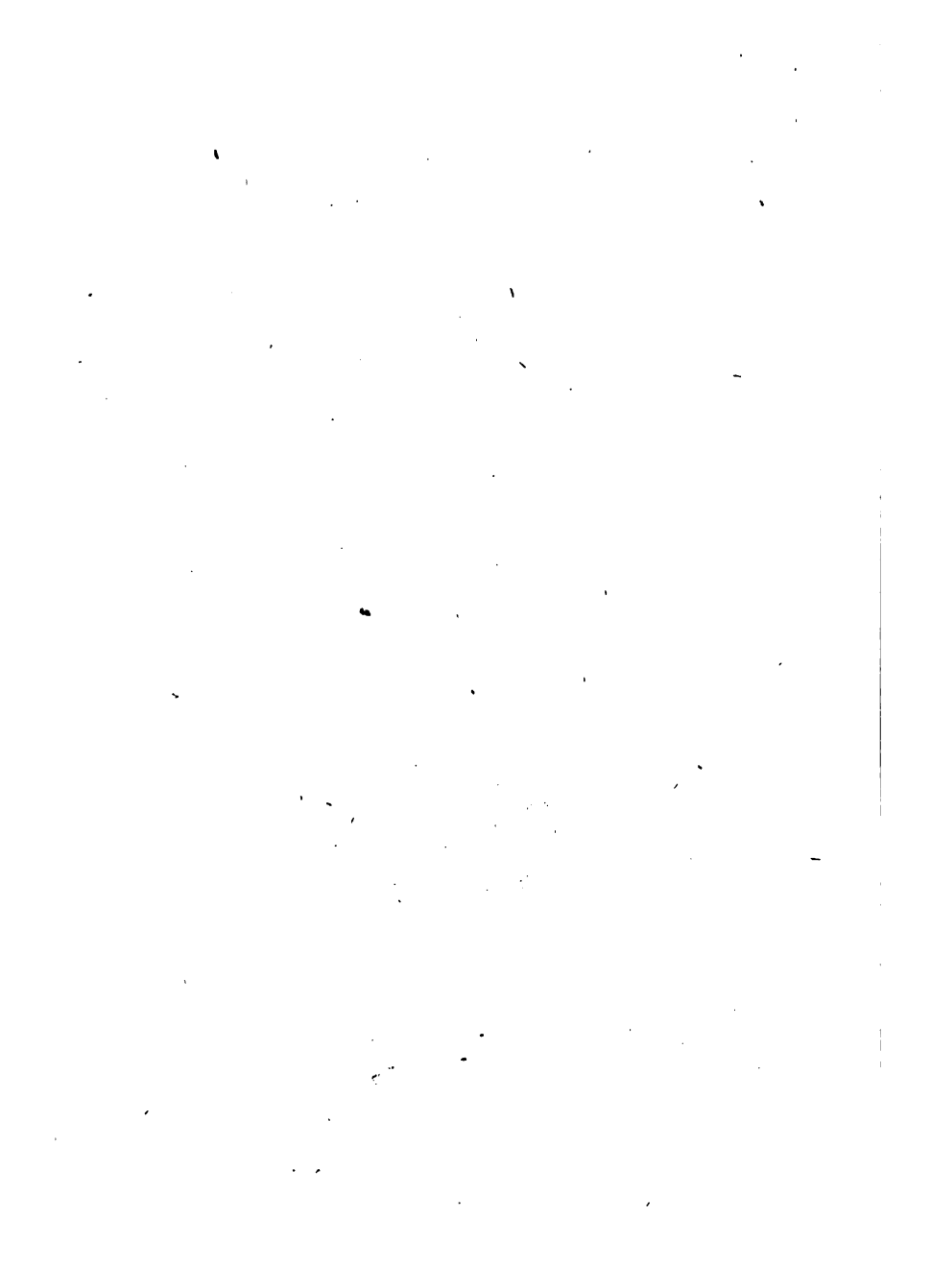
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# SOME WITNESSES FOR THE FAITH.

SIX SERMONS,

Preached by the request of the Christian Evidence Society,

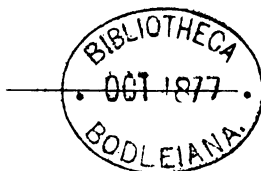
AT

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, SOUTH KENSINGTON,

ON

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS AFTER EASTER,

1877.



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1999, 2000).

As a result of the above, the following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

*H1:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information seeking.

*H2:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information gathering.

*H3:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information processing.

*H4:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information storage.

*H5:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information sharing.

*H6:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information retrieval.

*H7:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information management.

*H8:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information organization.

*H9:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information presentation.

*H10:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information distribution.

*H11:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information communication.

*H12:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information collaboration.

*H13:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information interaction.

*H14:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information exchange.

*H15:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information transfer.

*H16:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information transformation.

*H17:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information conversion.

*H18:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information integration.

*H19:* The use of the Internet will be positively related to the use of the Internet for information synthesis.



## CONSCIENCE, A WITNESS TO GOD.

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“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.”—1 JOHN v. 10.

It would have surprised and perhaps shocked some of the elders among us, if they had been told thirty or forty years ago, that, within their own lifetime, a course of lectures on Christian Evidences would have to begin with an argument to prove the existence of God. Why, a century and a half ago, Bishop Butler thought he might safely assume a belief in God among the sceptics for whom he wrote his “Analogy.” Is our age, in respect of religious belief, in a lower position than the age of Rousseau and Voltaire?

No indeed! Thankfully may we acknowledge that our generation is far more earnest and far more religious than the generation whom Butler addressed. And it is for this very reason among

others,—because of the more earnest desire to be sincere in the matter of religion,—that we have to commence our argument at a higher point, at the very starting-point of all religious inquiry, with the question of God's existence.

The sceptics of Butler's day were immoral, licentious men, whose only care was to get rid of the Bible as a rule of life: once delivered from that severe standard of holiness, they had no objection to believe in the merely beneficent First Cause whom the Deists offered them. The sceptics of our day, on the other hand, are men of moral and conscientious lives, valuing the Bible, and desiring to retain it as the best of lesson-books, if only they can empty it of that *supernatural* element, which seems to them an impossible object of human knowledge. "Impossible," observe: they have no other reason for declining it. But to them the *supernatural*, including (as it logically must) the being of God, is (to use their own word) simply "unknowable." They neither believe it, nor disbelieve it. They are neither Theists, nor yet Atheists. Having, as it seems to them, no faculty capable of reaching to the supernatural, they decline to entertain the question. True (they say) a large portion of mankind, apt to mistake imagination for knowledge, profess to

believe in God ; but men who have been trained to believe only what they scientifically know, must, if sincere, hold aloof. They will live their lives as righteously as they can ; and if there be a God and an hereafter, they surely cannot be worse off for having honestly confessed ignorance of One whom they had no faculty of knowing.

Now, these views, or rather this attitude towards religion, is finding expression in common talk and in our daily literature. Thus, all of us are more or less called upon to consider the foundations, yes, the very foundations of our religious belief ; and to qualify ourselves to give some answer—I do not say some argument, but some sensible answer—to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us.

Hence this course of Lectures on Christian Evidences ; and hence this introductory Lecture on “Conscience as a Witness to God.”

If I might assume the Divine authority of Holy Scripture, the question might be closed in very few words ; for the sceptic’s only objection is, that he has no faculty within him capable of apprehending God. And what says my text ? He that believeth hath the witness—the witness of God, which is greater than any witness of men—*within himself*.

But my business to-day is not to prove that Scripture declares it, but to lead you round about by another way to the same conclusion, and show you, *from considerations drawn from your own personal experience*, that what Scripture declares is true. My endeavour must be to make you feel for yourselves that you have such a witness to God *within you*, in what you call your "Conscience."

What is Conscience? If we can arrive at a fairly satisfactory and complete account of Conscience, our task, we shall find, is accomplished, and the sceptic answered.

We will begin with such rough and ready description of Conscience as may suggest itself to all, and feel our way towards better definitions. The writers of the last century were wont to call Conscience "the regulative faculty." If you take a watch to pieces, you find among its several parts one called "the regulator;" and, by studying its relation to the other parts, you soon see that it is designed to regulate their action, and is therefore of supreme importance to the watch. Just so, if you review the various faculties which go to make up man's moral nature, you find one which is no less evidently designed to control the rest. It may not succeed in doing so; the appetites, passions, and affec-

tions may rebel and get the upper hand. But none the less clearly, nay, all the more clearly, among the uproar of those insurgent faculties, is heard the reclaiming voice of Conscience, as of one born to command. The true royalty of the monarch often shines forth most conspicuously when he is dethroned. And even so Conscience is often more felt when disobeyed than when obeyed. So manifestly is it designed and intended to be the regulator of our moral being!

From this view of the design of Conscience it is obvious to make a rapid inference, and say that, as in Natural Theology, design implies a designer, so here, the fact of our having this *law* within implies a *Lawgiver*. And further, observing, by a very constant experience, that the law of Conscience speaks in very much the same tones to all, and that obedience to this law makes for the happiness of the whole race to which we belong, we may very probably infer that that lawgiver is none other than the Creator of mankind, who, for the good of the race, thus engraved His law on the heart of each. The felt presence of a Viceroy within the breast powerfully and immediately suggests to us, and, in point of fact, has suggested to all men in all times, the idea of a King of kings who placed it there.

As in *Natural* theology we find proof of a supremely wise and powerful Creator; so in what may be called *Moral* theology, based on the study of our moral constitution, we find evidence that this same Creator is also a supremely righteous Judge, to whom we are responsible for all that we do or say or think.

And thus it may be urged, and very cogently urged, that in *Conscience* we have a witness to the God in whom we believe.

But before we rest content with this answer to the sceptic, let us listen to what he has to say in reply. He says,—“By your own showing your belief in God is at best but an inference, an inference which you draw from certain observed facts of Conscience. It amounts to this, that you have a faculty called ‘Conscience’ within you, which you cannot account for except on the hypothesis of a God. And although the hypothesis be highly probable, so probable that ’tis by far the safest to act as though it were true, yet to talk of loving a *hypothesis* with all your heart and soul and strength, is manifestly irrational. But let that pass. Suppose I can account for Conscience otherwise, without having recourse to the hypothesis of a God, what then becomes of your argument?”

And then the sceptic proceeds to give his own account of Conscience,—“What you, in your imaginative way, may call a law, written by a lawgiver on the tablets of your heart, I simply call a *generalization of experience*. By observing what kind of conduct is most conducive to health and happiness, you—or those whose traditions you inherit—have arrived at certain rules of conduct which you treasure in your memory, and when you refer to them you poetically call it ‘listening to the voice of Conscience.’”

Now, what have we believers to say in answer? We must pursue our study of Conscience further; and we shall find that the sceptic’s notion that it is merely a *set of rules*, generalized from experience, will not at all suffice to account for its action within us. For there is in Conscience a *power over us* which no mere rules could have. Conscience not only tells us what is right, and what is wrong; but has a mysterious power to suffuse an inward happiness when we follow the right, and to pain us, even to torture, when we do the wrong. No mere rules or maxims of conduct could do this.

The sceptic replies,—“You mistake me; in generalizing the rule, you have, of course, also gathered a knowledge of the consequences which

follow upon its observance or non-observance. There is in the course and nature of human affairs 'a stream of tendency,' making for what we call 'the right,' and against what we call 'the wrong.' And you have learned by experience that 'tis best to bring yourself into harmony with this stream of tendency. It is the apprehension of the evil consequences of disregarding the rules thus learned, that seems to give those rules their power over you."

The believer answers at once,—“Nay, but this will not suffice to explain what I continually notice in my Conscience. There is something *personal* in the authority whose voice it is, dealing with me as persons deal with persons, as my parents dealt with me when I was a child. It seems to know me wonderfully; it knows my infirmities and my difficulties, and it makes allowance for them in its judgments. No general stream or tendency of human affairs, no mere generalized law could do this. A law might (as you have explained the term) inflict itself and pass on. But a law is wholly impersonal. *I* know the law, but the law has no knowledge of *me*.”

The sceptic feels that we are getting into deeper waters than he likes. We are drawing him out of the world of *nature* into that other



world of *personality*, in which he is much less at home. (Time was when the world of personality was more studied than the world of Nature; but just now 'tis out of fashion.) However, he thinks to regain *terra firma* by replying,—“I admit what you say at once. Conscience is, if you will, *personal*; and that for a very simple reason: Conscience is only another name for *yourself*, your *rational self*, criticizing and influencing—menacing if you please—the less rational parts of your nature. Of course you know yourself and your disadvantages, and are only too glad to make excuses accordingly. Depend upon it, Conscience is merely your reasonable self, reflecting on your conduct, approvingly or disapprovingly.”

This reply of the sceptic is so plausible, that it is not easy at first glance to see where it fails. But it breaks down, and that just where the energy of Conscience is most conspicuous. For what is the particular phase of Conscience which a dramatist selects when he wishes to make his audience feel most vividly its majesty and power? It is *remorse*.

It is the remorse of a Richard the Third, on the eve of the battle; the remorse of a Macbeth, on the very steps of his throne. *Remorse* is Conscience in her avenging mood.

*Is remorse rational?* The question is worth asking, though perhaps you never considered it. And the answer is a very simple one: Remorse is perfectly rational, if there be a God; but *perfectly irrational, if there be no God.*

For mark well the nature of remorse. It is not regret for the evil consequences of a past action. It is wholly irrespective of consequences. That solitary deed you did, that cowardly lie you told, may have left no trace behind it on the stream of time. For all other reasons it might be dead, buried, and forgotten; an absolutely bygone thing, in no way affecting your present self or others; but your conscience—I beg pardon, *you*, yourself, your reasonable self—chooses rather to keep it alive, rankling in your memory, troubling, tormenting, unnerving you! Is this altogether rational? I answer again,—“Yes, if you are still responsible for that deed. But on the sceptic’s hypothesis, that you are only responsible to yourself or to others of your kind,—and if neither yourself nor others are now in the least affected by the deed,—then of all gratuitous miseries, this misery of remorse is the most gratuitous and the most irrational.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An anecdote is told somewhere of the survivor of a shipwreck, who confessed that in the hour of greatest

"Irrational, I grant you," he replies, changing his ground,—“irrational, as all superstition is irrational. Remorse is simply a superstition, due to certain traditional stories of another world, put into our minds in childhood, and difficult to get rid of afterwards.”

Difficult to get rid of! Yes, indeed; and for a reason acknowledged by all the sages of the ancient world. Let one of them express it:—“Conscience of right and wrong,” says Cicero, “has a great weight of its own, quite irrespective of any divine sanctions. If you deny this, there is an end to morality.”<sup>2</sup> And Juvenal declares, no less plainly, that remorse has its roots far deeper than any such fears of punishment hereafter; such stories, he says, entirely fail to account for the severity with which remorse scourges the wrong-doer.<sup>3</sup>

peril his mind was altogether unnerved by the remembrance of some grapes, which in his childhood he had taken from the bedside of a sick sister.

<sup>2</sup> “Virtutis et vitiorum, sine ullâ divinâ ratione, grave ipsius conscientiæ pondus est; quâ sublata, jacent omnia.”—Cicero *De Nat. Deorum* iii. 35.

<sup>3</sup> The terrible description of Conscience in the 13th Satire is well known:—

“Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum :  
Pœna autem vehemens ac multo sævior illis  
Quas et Cæditius gravis invenit et Rhadamanthus,  
Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.”

But we need not appeal to the ancients; let the sceptic honestly answer this question from his own experience or observation:—Which comes first in a child, the blush of shame, or the fear of punishment in another world? This latter traditionary fear would never have laid hold of men in all ages, as it has done, were it not that it found something responsive to it within, rooted in the very essence of human nature.

Education may do much; it may build up a system of morality upon Conscience. But Conscience is to morality, what axioms are to geometry. Of Conscience, as of axioms, it may be said that it is, not a *product*, but a *factor* in education.

No theory of traditional teaching, therefore, will explain that deep-seated sense of responsibility within you.

But there it is. You have to account for it. Your scientific explanations entirely fail to account for it. You refused my explanation, because you said you could furnish a better. You have failed. None of your explanations, generalized experiences, rules and maxims of conduct, apprehension of consequences, stream of tendency, the rational self judging the irrational self, traditional teaching;—not one of these is sufficient to account for the facts of

Conscience, facts (be it observed) the commonest in human experience;—they are unaccountable, unless, indeed, we are responsible, not merely to ourselves, not merely to our fellow-men, but also to some righteous personal Power within us and above us, whose judgments are in harmony with those of Conscience ;—unless, in one word, there be a God.

I have now endeavoured to consider fairly what an unbeliever would have to say about Conscience. It seems to me that the answers I have suggested are sound. At any rate, a believer in Scripture will admit our conclusion, for it is Scriptural, though he may think we have argued it imperfectly.

But I must not forget that we purposely allowed one thing that our supposed disputant urged against us to pass by unanswered. We must now return to it. We will ourselves remind him of it; and that, not of mere generosity, but for our own sake. For we shall ever find that the cause of truth is ill served, if in our advance we leave behind us any strongholds of the enemy untaken. Nay, those strongholds once taken, prove sometimes the very key of our position in the final conflict.

Now what was the sceptic's objection which

we left unanswered? It was this, that even if we made good our case, and proved (as we hope we have done), that the facts of Conscience are incapable of explanation, except there be a God; still God's existence remains simply an *hypothesis*, in the highest degree probable, it may be, but only of the nature of an hypothesis; and that a hypothetical God is not one whom we can love with all our heart and soul.

Now, by the way, I am not sure that we need concede this alleged impossibility of loving one whom we only know by way of inference.

A captive in a dark dungeon who finds all sorts of little comforts daily ministered to him, he knows not how or whence, can only *infer* that some one all unseen, unknown, outside his prison walls, is caring for him. May he not love, may he not feel a sincere gratitude to that unknown benefactor? Our sceptical friend would surely allow it, and qualify his assertion that, for such knowledge as shall inspire love there must be, if not actual contact, yet at least the conscious presence of person with person. But we will concede this to him.

Let it be conceded that in order to know God as we claim to know Him, we must be directly conscious of His presence, as friend is conscious of the presence of his friend. Is this impossible?

Is it true that man has no faculty wherewith to apprehend God? Is not Conscience, when completely defined, precisely that faculty? Conscience, as the word declares, as we have felt all along, is *consciousness* of something or of some one. And we have seen that what we are conscious of is no mere impersonal rule, no mere generalization of experience, no mere apprehension of consequences. What we are conscious of is an authority, a personal authority, to whom we are responsible. Observe, Conscience is not itself the authority, but rather *the consciousness of the authority*.<sup>4</sup> And this personal authority is not our fellow-men, for in the solitude of a desert we are equally conscious of it. Nor is it ourselves; for it would be utterly irrational for self to tremble at the thought of self.<sup>5</sup> What then is this authority, near to us as our soul, yet above us, knowing our secret thoughts and wonderfully dealing with us as person deals with person, as parent deals with child, knowing all our difficulties and infirmities, making allowance for them, yet overlooking

<sup>4</sup> "Potest obumbrari, quia non est Deus; extinguere non potest, quia a Deo est."—Tert. *De Animâ*, c. 41.

<sup>5</sup> "I had as lief not be, as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself."

*Julius Cæsar*, Act i. Sc. 2.

nothing, never leaving us, with us in our daily walk, with us in our darkened chamber, with us in the crowd, with us when we are most alone, unavoidable, undeceivable, unanswerable in its judgments,—an authority of which, in every act of Conscience we are directly conscious? I say what is it? Why seek words of my own? This authority has been inimitably described by one long ago, a very ancient writer, whose experience of Conscience seems to have corresponded in all respects to ours; he seems, if you will, to be apostrophizing this mysterious authority of which Conscience makes us conscious; and he says,—

“Thou hast searched me out, and known me; thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. There is not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it altogether.” He confesses the deep mystery of this authority, of which he is conscious: “Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it.” He connects it with his creation: “Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me: I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” He cannot escape from this authority;



nor does he desire it, for it is the only guidance he can perfectly trust: "Whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me; then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and light to thee are both alike." Nay, this mysterious Visitor of his soul will follow him into the other world: "If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also." <sup>6</sup>

'Tis even so; one only Authority can satisfy this description; it is the Authority of God. And *Conscience is the consciousness of God*. Is it true, then, that we have no faculty where-with we may know God? Thank God He has not dealt so with His children!

And now it may seem, perhaps, that our task is discharged. For, in seeking a definition, we have found in Conscience a witness to a Divine

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Professor Wace's deeply interesting Boyle Lectures (1875) for this application of the 139th Psalm; and for other suggestive thoughts on the subject of Conscience.

Being who is above us. And yet, there is one further step needed, if we could only see our way to it, to complete the witness.

For, if we stop where we are, there is a difficulty unsolved. The point we have reached is this :—that we find within us the Consciousness of an Authority which is above us, yet within us also ; supreme, and yet capable of being resisted, yes, even stifled and crushed ; and yet again, when most resisted and most crushed, then most felt to be *supreme*. How is this ?

That ancient Hebrew Psalmist seemed to conceive of this Authority as *Divine*. But then to the Hebrew, the ascription of all his deeper experiences (as also of all that was most striking outside him in nature) to a Divine Being came easily. Whereas *our* tendency is the other way. To some of us it seems difficult thus to pass from the human to the Divine. The two planes appear so essentially distinct. And yet the Authority of Conscience seems to move in both. A function of the human mind, and yet controlling the human mind ! How can this be ? How can this Authority be at once human and Divine ?

It would be interesting, therefore, to take one step further ; and (as Plato would say) to make a fine venture in our quest of truth, and to ask :—

What if we found it recorded that in this very Hebrew nation, so sensitive to Conscience, this Hebrew nation which had ever an instinctive belief that *Man* was a child of *God*, that there was something Divine in the heart of man, and—more—that there was a human element in the heart of God, enfolded in the bosom of God,—for is not their whole literature tinctured with these two national convictions, and by a presentiment that He who had been thus ever guiding them (both individually and nationally) would one day be manifested?—I say, how if in this Hebrew nation, thus selected and prepared (as it were) for this very purpose, there appeared ONE, who surprised and awed all who heard Him by speaking in the very tones of Conscience, as if the Light that lighteth every man had been made flesh and stood before them; constraining all who were in the habit of listening to Conscience to listen to Him,—for He spake “as One having Authority,” “no man ever spake as this man spake,” He seemed “to know what was in the heart of man;”—and on the other hand forcing all who were wont to crush and silence Conscience, to see that, if they would hold their own, *Him* too must they crush and silence!—crushed, therefore, to death;—yes, but mark it well,—as with Conscience, so with

Him—*not silenced*—telling His judges that Hereafter they should know Him at the right hand of Power! the *Word* which they had rejected, the same should judge them at the Last Day;—crushed to death, but rising to life again, therefore; and in that risen life, within the Veil, exercising a power over men's hearts far greater than He had on earth: Oh! if this were only true, what mysteries of our inner being would be hereby solved!

And is it not true? Open this book, and tell me whether you do not recognize the Christ there revealed to you. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" He seems to say to each! In the Jesus of whom you here read, in this marvellous Self-revelation of the most mysterious Person of whom this world has record, do you not recognize that very *Authority* which from your childhood upward has been speaking to you; speaking to you from within as "a better self," when you were obedient; speaking to you as a judge from above, when disobedient; speaking not to you only but to all men; and thus binding mankind into a brotherhood by the feeling of a common responsibility to an unseen Lord of our spirits; dealing with us to this hour precisely as we read He dealt with those disciples, calling them friends,

not servants; so now, persuading not coercing, unwilling to compromise our free-will, and therefore yielding, now as then, when resisted, but yielding under protest; One whom we must either love *or fear*; so perfectly human, yet so Divine! So one with us, yet so supremely our Lord and Master! Oh! how wonderfully does this “engrafted Word” in the heart of each, this Light still lighting every man that cometh into the world,<sup>7</sup> correspond to that “Word” which nineteen centuries ago “was made flesh and dwelt among us”! “As in water face answereth to face,” so does the Christ of Conscience to the Christ of History.

May we not, then, take that further step, and say that in our Conscience we have an abiding witness not to God only, but to God as revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord?

But this further step would be beyond our province. Into the question of the truth of the Gospel record this essay may not enter. One thing only would I venture to suggest in this connexion:—that they who reject this Book because of its supernatural element can hardly have considered well how charged with mystery, with supernatural mystery, is that Conscience

<sup>7</sup> *Illuminatio quippe nostra participatio Verbi est, illius scilicet vitæ quæ lux est hominum.*—*Aug. de Trin.* iv. 4.

within their own breast. Christianity creates not these mysteries. It finds them, and solves them.\* You may reject the solution; but you cannot reject the mystery. There it is, fixed and rooted in your innermost consciousness. Whether you like it or not, you have two hard facts of consciousness within you—a sense of freedom to will, and a sense of responsibility for the willing. The one is as certain as the other. And there is strife, you know there is strife, you are often torn with strife, between the two—*self-will* on one side and *Authority* on the other. You may, or you may not, accept the revelation that this same Authority, of which you are conscious, was once in time manifested as the Lord of men, and as their Healer and Redeemer; but the consciousness within you of an Authority to Whom you are finally responsible, you cannot decline.

As surely as your bodily organs are sensitive to the impressions of the outer world, so certainly is the spirit of man conscious of God. This spiritual faculty may, 'tis true, be weakened by want of exercise; and in these days, as we have already observed, men's thoughts are being unduly drawn away from those nobler studies that would strengthen this higher consciousness

\* See much to this purpose, admirably put, in Professor Westcott's *Gospel of the Resurrection*.

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by the fascination of physical phenomena. And hence it is, that the witness which Conscience bears to God is, in the minds of some among us, obscured. But the master-spirits of all time have felt and acknowledged it. And though for the moment it be dimmed, yet may we rest assured that the faith which commanded the assent of Bacon and of Shakspeare, of Leibnitz and of Newton, of Pascal and of Butler, will be the faith of our children; and in their time, as in our fathers', the Light which is of God will be owned as the Light and Life of men. The witness of men may be doubted; but the witness of God is greater; and that witness we have within us.

## GOD SEEN AND KNOWN IN THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

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"Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"—JOHN xiv. 8, 9.

THIS appeal of Philip might well be regarded as summing up the long yearnings of humanity. In age after age the cry of all thoughtful and of all suffering hearts has been, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Let us see in whose hands we are; who and of what character is the Author of this strange and mysterious world, with its glory and its gloom, its joys and its miseries, its right and its wrong, its sin and its righteousness, its order and its anarchy—in a word, of this groaning and travailing existence. To answer that question has been the effort of the earliest philosophy and the despair of the latest; a reply to it, of some kind or other, has been the



centre and the motive power of every religion. With insignificant exceptions, the eyes of the whole human race have been concentrated on this supreme mystery; and the history of religion is the record of the eagerness with which men have clutched at the most promising solutions offered them.

Time after time, indeed, have philosophers declared the problem to be insoluble, and have counselled men to abandon it; but as often has the human heart rebelled against the prohibition and has resumed its passionate search after God. So far, however, as all natural efforts have gone, it must be owned the search has been a failure. The greatest and most spiritual of ancient philosophers pronounced that it is difficult to discover the Author and Father of the world, and that when one has found Him it is impossible to make Him known to men. Philosophy alone has not, up to the present, advanced beyond that point, and in some memorable instances has even fallen short of it. But the most striking and most melancholy illustration of the intense difficulty of this problem is to be seen in that great religion which has laid such hold on the Eastern world as to number more votaries than any other religion whatever. Buddhism has abandoned the

problem in despair. It starts with ignoring God, if not with a negation of Him, and by a necessary consequence it ends in what amounts to a negation of human existence. When a personal God is absorbed in nature, it becomes the hope of the human soul that it will be absorbed in nature also. In short, while we may be deeply convinced that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork," while we fully recognize the irrefragable strength of those arguments by which the existence of an Almighty and allwise Creator is inferred from the consideration of the phenomena of Nature, it must at the same time be admitted that, as a matter of fact, these phenomena have either not evoked this belief in mankind at large, or they have not been sufficient to support it. In supernatural Powers of one kind or another men have always believed ; but in one Father of all, Creator of heaven and earth, they have either not believed, or they have soon lost the belief, except where they have been brought under the influence of Jewish or of Christian thought.

At the present day this ancient question is pressed upon us with a new force. On the one hand, the old yearnings of the human heart are as strong as ever, and men and women in their

sin and their weakness crave for a Father in whose everlasting arms they may find a refuge. But on the other hand, philosophers and critics are loud and persistent in maintaining that we have no means of really verifying the fact of such a Father's existence. Right and wrong, the truths of the moral law, these it is said, are matters of experience, respecting which we can satisfy ourselves by observation, and which are verified in every-day life. But God, His nature, His will, His character—these are mysteries entirely beyond our ken, which we can never put to the test of actual observation. They may be beautiful beliefs; they may be the very poetry of life; they may have been its most elevating influences; but they are creatures of the imagination not of the reason, they cannot be seen and handled. We are asked for definite evidence, as distinct from mere authoritative assertions, of the existence and the character of the God of Christians.

Now I am far from admitting the justice of such a claim for sensible proof of this primary truth of our religion. The conscience of mankind bears witness to its verity as soon as it is asserted; and this witness ought to be sufficient to command our faith. But waiving this consideration for the moment, I propose on

the present occasion to meet such objections on their own ground : and to consider whether facts do not exist which answer every demand that can fairly be made by the most rigid experimental inquirer. These facts are to be found in the life and character of our Lord Jesus Christ, as narrated in the Gospels. Let us approach them for the moment rather as observers than as believers. Let us suppose any serious or thoughtful man brought to Christ as the first disciples were, living with Him in public and in private, hearing His words and studying His acts, and becoming familiar with His mind and thought. What, let us ask, would be some of the conclusions which such an observer, if honest and impartial, would arrive at ?

Now one of the first things that must strike him would be that our Lord's language habitually assumed His standing in the most intimate relation to an unseen Person whom He spoke of as His Father. That is the beginning, as it were, of all His thoughts. If such a person as we suppose were acquainted with our Lord's early life, he would learn that the most characteristic incident of His childhood, that which alone was thought necessary to be recorded by those who subsequently wrote of Him, was that on a visit to Jerusalem He left His father and mother,

and went to the Temple in order to sit at the feet of the Doctors; and when His mother asked Him how He could give her the anxiety of such a search for Him, He expressed surprise at her not understanding that He was sure to be found in the Temple, His Father's house. "How is it that ye sought Me?" He said. That is, How is it that ye did not know at once where to find Me? "Wist ye not that I must needs be in My Father's house?"<sup>1</sup> Such is the glimpse vouchsafed to us of our Saviour's earliest consciousness, while He was still increasing "in wisdom and stature."<sup>2</sup> His Father, His heavenly Father, absorbed His whole soul, and drew Him away from every other influence to the house and the word of God. He is next revealed to us at His Baptism, and again this relation to the Father is the prominent feature in the scene. A voice is heard saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."<sup>3</sup> We follow Him to the temptation—the critical trial of His fitness for the awful Ministry to which He was destined, and in what does the temptation consist? In three successive attempts of the malignant spirit to induce Him to distrust His Father. He is invited to exert His own power, to claim a glory of His own,

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 49.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 52.<sup>3</sup> Matt. iii. 17.

to display His special privileges, for objects which were not those of His Father's will. He refuses; He submits Himself absolutely to that will, and He comes forth from the trial to proclaim, not His own kingdom, but the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

He proceeds to instruct His disciples, in discourses of which the Sermon on the Mount is the fullest illustration, to live and to act in constant trust towards our Father in Heaven; He teaches them to pray to that Father, He bids them be sure that He will give good things to them that ask Him, just as surely as they give good gifts to their children. He places the two relations on a parallel, and thus bids them realize the personal character of God as distinctly as their children recognize their own. He tells them that this Father sees in secret, and recognizes all their acts of faithfulness and trust.<sup>5</sup> His teaching therefore, with the devotion He founds upon it, is directed to impress upon His followers the same submission to the Father which we have observed in Himself. But I only refer, in passing, to His teaching in order to observe its consistency with His own acts. What is most important for our purpose is to observe those acts themselves.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. iv. 1—11.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. v., vi., vii.

We find Him, then, during a ministry of two or three years, to quote St. Matthew's summary, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.<sup>6</sup> He exhibited in that short time a character of mercy, love, truth, righteousness, which has rendered Him, not only among Christians, but even among those who reject His loftiest claims, the supreme ideal of all that the conscience and the heart of man demands. None with whom we are concerned to argue dispute His absolute moral and spiritual supremacy.

But in what capacity does He display these qualities and perform these acts? Is it in the capacity of a good man, acting on his own convictions of what is right and exercising his own powers? By no means. The essential character of our Saviour's life and ministry is the reverse of this. He insists continually on the fact that He is simply carrying out the will of another, of that Father of whom He spoke in His earliest recorded utterance, and His avowed object on all occasions is to reveal that will. For example, we are told by St. Matthew that on a memorable occasion, when John the Baptist sent to inquire, "Art thou He

<sup>6</sup> Matt. iv. 23.

that should come, or do we look for another?" and when He had replied by recounting His mighty works, He answered and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."<sup>7</sup> In other words, He was able to do these works, He could display this grace and glory, because all things had been delivered unto Him of the Father. At other times He disclaims still more explicitly any capacity to act independently. His highest claims to authority are dwelt on in the greatest detail in the Gospel of St. John; but they are never claims to independent power. On the contrary, He declares, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise; for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xi. 25—27.

<sup>8</sup> John v. 19, 20.



The Gospel of St. John, in short, is conclusive on this point ; but we need not depend on it to exhibit the paramount influence on our Saviour's life of His devotion to His Father. The most critical scene in His life, that in which His whole nature was stirred to its profoundest depths, and in which its essential principles were put to the most cruel test, was that of His passion and crucifixion. Of this we have accounts by all four Evangelists, and it is evident that the circumstances of this awful scene were regarded by the Apostles as of supreme import. What then is the chief characteristic of His mind at that time? His recorded sayings are few, but they are, above all things, impregnated with trust in His Father, and submission to His Father's will. In His agony in the garden He prays three times, in terrible earnestness, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."<sup>1</sup> At the commencement of His agony on the cross, He prays, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."<sup>1</sup> At the crisis of that agony His almost despairing cry is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"<sup>2</sup> And when the sacrifice is consum-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 39.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46.

mated, and He is able to say, "It is finished,"<sup>3</sup> He utters that prayer of complete trust and submission, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."<sup>4</sup> If there is one thing certain about His crucifixion, it is that He submitted to it in obedience to the will of His Father in heaven, that the sense of His Father's presence was His one sustaining conviction, that His deepest agony was one passing apprehension that His Father had forsaken Him, and that in His last breath He resigned His soul into His Father's hands. To that Father His first and His last witness was borne during the time that He was among us as a man like ourselves, sharing our weakness, and bearing our sins. But the same characteristic is preserved after His resurrection. "Go," He said to Mary Magdalene when He was risen, "go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God;"<sup>5</sup> and He commanded His disciples to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>6</sup> From His first words to His last He identifies His work absolutely with doing the will of the Father and revealing the Father's will and character.

<sup>3</sup> John xix. 30.<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiii. 46.<sup>5</sup> John xx. 17.<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.

It will be observed that this conclusion is practically independent of any critical questions which may be raised respecting the details of the Gospel narratives. Of course, if it be denied that we can place any reliance on them, not only this, but all other arguments respecting our Saviour's life must fail. But no one, hardly, will go that length; and admitting the truth of those narratives, even if it be only substantially, these deductions from them are inevitable. The story of the Passion is alone sufficient. Had we nothing left us but that, we should still have the most crucial proof that the whole life, the whole sacrifice, the whole love of Christ was based upon love of One whom He called His Father, and consisted in complete surrender to His will. That memorable prayer, in short, which is recorded for us in St. John is undoubtedly an exact summary of the spirit of His life. Its burden is to declare that the object of His life has been to reveal the name, that is to say, the nature and the will of His Father. "Father," He says, "the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee; as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is

life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”<sup>7</sup> “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world, . . . they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.”<sup>8</sup> “O righteous Father,” He concludes, as the sum and substance of His last desires, “the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”<sup>9</sup>

Now, if this be admitted to be the essential characteristic of our Lord’s life, you will at once see what follows. Who will venture to say that an inseparable element of that life, an element which becomes most conspicuous at its most solemn moments, was an illusion? Our Lord declares, at least as solemnly as He declares anything else, that He lived His life and died His death in direct communion with

<sup>7</sup> John xvii. 1—3. <sup>8</sup> John xvii. 6—8. <sup>9</sup> John xvii. 25, 26.

a personal God, who was His Father and our Father: He disclaimed any life of His own apart from that Father, and He bade us seek all our life in the same Father. If He be rejected altogether, there is no more to be said. But if any one acknowledges His supreme moral claim on the conscience, must he not also acknowledge that we have in this life, this experience, this death of our Lord, as distinct and personal a manifestation of our Father in Heaven as we have of anything else to which the human conscience bears witness?

Let it be particularly observed that the fact we have to take into account is not merely, nor so much, that our Saviour taught the existence of a God who is our Father in Heaven. That indeed would be sufficient, but there is infinitely more than this. It is that He Himself based His whole life upon the acknowledgment of that Father; that He found in this acknowledgment His support in the most cruel trials; that His meat, as He expressed it, was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work—that He lived upon it and died upon it. Not merely would His teaching be mistaken, supposing there to be no such being, but His whole life would be an illusion. Is that, I would ask, a conceivable supposi-

tion? It is barely mentionable. But it is the only alternative to acknowledging that the image of our Father in heaven, the image of One whom no man hath seen at any time, was mirrored in the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ in a similar manner, though with infinitely greater completeness, to that in which intense personal influences are mirrored in our own souls. Could the mind and heart of most of us be read, it would be found that some loved, or honoured, or trusted person has stamped his influence on us, and that person's character could be read by the impression which is discernible on our own minds. In a similar manner, according to our Lord's assurance, was the will and character of God the Father stamped upon His own character and will; and that which we see in the face of Jesus Christ is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Now, bearing all this in mind, I would ask whether I was not justified in saying at the outset that, even admitting the extreme claim advanced by some critics for an actual, experimental verification of the fact of the existence of a personal Father of our spirits, we can afford it in the most ample manner. In other words, was not St. John justified in his wonderful statement: "That which was from the

beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"?<sup>1</sup> The Apostle's claim is of the very kind now in question. It is a claim to have seen, heard, and handled the eternal life. By means of his bodily senses, he had been placed in communion with a grace and a glory transcending anything conceivable in human nature. He had been personally assured, as he lay on the breast of his Master in that intimate communion in which soul sees into soul, that it was no mere human character he had been loving. His Master had told him that He was in the Father and the Father in Him;<sup>2</sup> and he had been assured that if he abode in that Master's love, he was also abiding in the love of his Master's Father. This assurance to St. John was associated and identified with a moral light and spiritual

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 1—3.<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 10.

illumination which rendered it impossible for him to doubt its truth. "This," he proceeds, in the passage I have just quoted, "is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."<sup>a</sup> That message has been the regeneration of Christendom; we believe it will be the regeneration of mankind. It is impossible to conceive it associated with a radical illusion; and if so, we have evidence in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the existence, of the nature and of the will of God—in one word of His Name—surer and more certain than we have of the existence and character of any person whom we have not seen from the witness and from the life of another.

If such is the case, I need but briefly remind you to what this revelation amounts. In the first place, we have here a conclusive answer to those difficulties which have been raised as to the possibility of regarding God as a Person.

<sup>a</sup> 1 John i. 5-7.



It is not necessary to define the meaning of that term, and of course, as applied to God, it is something infinitely beyond our conceptions. But our Lord Jesus Christ was a Person, and He was in a relation which was evidently a personal relation with His Father in heaven. He could love Him as a Father, trust Him as a Father, pray to Him as a Father, commend His soul to Him as a Father; He could speak of His will, His love, His good pleasure. In a word, He attributed to Him acts and dispositions as personal as any we attribute to one another; He manifested Him as standing in a relation to Himself and to us similar to that which one person holds to another in this world. That is what we mean, and all we need insist upon with respect to the personality of God. It is precisely as real, as vital, as the personality of Christ, and just in proportion as Christ's personality is realized by us shall we realize the personality of His Father. Philosophy, as we saw at the outset, has striven in vain to pierce the veil which shrouds the Great Creator; but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. In Christ we have Him brought home to our hearts and souls in a living form and a

human relationship. In this sense, among others, our Saviour declares "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,"<sup>4</sup> for neither in nature nor in any other soul has that Father been similarly mirrored. In the other Scriptures, indeed, there are deep impressions of Him upon the souls of prophets, seers, and saints. In the Psalms in particular, His spirit is heard sweeping over the strings of the human heart, and evoking its deepest harmonies. But though the experience of a David or an Isaiah might convince us, and ought to convince us of the reality of our relationship with God, their characters, if not their utterances, are marred by human imperfections, and we might not be able to appeal to men for implicit trust in them. But nothing disturbs the perfect calm of the Divine image in the soul of Christ. There is not a single false note to mar our conviction that in His manifestation of the Divine name we are listening to the perfect harmonies of heaven.

It thus becomes impossible to separate the theological from the moral revelation. It must, indeed, be observed, however briefly, that the complete unity thus revealed between our Lord and the Father transcends

<sup>4</sup> John xiv. 6.

anything which can be conceived to exist between God and a mere man; and the claims He put forward can only be adequately explained by the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. The full value of the revelation of God in Christ cannot be realized until our Lord is regarded as not merely reflecting the Father's nature and will, but as one with them. The moment He is divided from the Father by any gulf, however apparently slight it may seem—the moment the slightest tinge of Arianism enters into our conceptions of His nature, that moment the communion He established between God and man is broken, and complete trust and harmony of will between them is rendered inconceivable. The distance between a creature and the Creator, however delicately the line may seem to be drawn, as it was in some forms of Semi-arianism, soon becomes felt to be inconceivably great, and a gulf is established between them which speedily becomes impassable. God again becomes unknown and inconceivable; and the imagination shapes visions of mysterious powers, potences, emanations which overshadow the mind with indefinable awe. But once let the human soul be assured that the spiritual, moral, and reasonable life seen in Jesus Christ was one in nature

with that of God Himself, and man then feels himself in communion with the Lord of all; perfect love casts out fear, and he enters on a career of unrestrained spiritual, moral, and reasonable energy. He is assured that his impurity, his ignorance, his weakness, will gradually be removed, in proportion as he knows, believes, and obeys the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

All these vast moral and intellectual consequences are involved in the recognition and the acknowledgment of the true Name of God in Christ. It became at once a duty and a necessity when that name was revealed, to give it some definite intellectual expression, and the result of that effort is embodied in the Creeds which are the heritage of the Church. It cannot well be denied that, in the course of the discussions thus occasioned, the combined ambition and passion of human nature led from time to time to the assignment of an undue importance to the purely intellectual aspect of the revelation; and especially where Greek culture, with its exaggerated fondness for dialectics, was dominant, the moral significance of these truths was frequently subordinated to theological subtleties. There is certainly no foundation in Scripture for any statement which should represent an

adequate intellectual apprehension of the Divine nature as an indispensable condition of salvation. But the moral and spiritual conviction of the spiritual and moral union between the Father and the Son, and of the union of both with that Spirit who speaks to our consciences and interprets to them the word of Christ—this, if Christ be, as we have been considering Him, the only adequate manifestation of the Godhead, must needs be the first requisite for a sound moral and spiritual condition of the soul. That moral apprehension cannot, indeed, long be maintained in its integrity if the intellectual apprehension and its dogmatic statement be falsified; but it is in its moral and spiritual bearing that its supreme importance consists.

In this, in a word, consists the supreme glory of the Gospel. That which the philosopher declared to be difficult or impossible has been accomplished once for all in a manner which is equally effectual for the learned and for the unlearned, for the rich and for the poor. The simplest child, the most unlettered peasant, can see the grace and glory of Jesus Christ, can apprehend in some degree His moral character, can learn to love and trust Him. As he does so, he learns to love and trust God, since the Father and the Son are one. From hence he learns the rela-

tion of God towards him in all the circumstances of his moral and spiritual, and not less of his physical life. When the burden of his sins is heavy upon him, he learns that it is no mere human language, but the voice of the Eternal God which bids him come to Christ for forgiveness and for peace. He believes that the gentle voice and the gracious hands which wrought miracles of mercy upon earth are those of one who was of the same nature and will as God, and that they will receive him hereafter into their merciful care. In affliction and at the hour of death he remembers that Christ, even in agony, could patiently submit Himself to His Father's will and commend His soul into His Father's hands ; and he can venture himself in life and death upon the same assurance. In a word, my brethren, seek after God in philosophy, or in any human system of religion, and your souls will never be satisfied. But seek Him in our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will find Him your rest and your refuge in all generations.

## THE RISE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, AN EVIDENCE OF HIS RESURRECTION.

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“If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”—1 Cor. xv. 17.

OUR minds are so constituted that we naturally inquire into the cause of what we see existing before our eyes—those of us, I mean, whose minds are trained to observation and reflection. When we are climbing up the hills, or scrambling amongst the rocks, we wonder what are the causes which led to this disposition of hill and valley; *why* are these rocks stratified, and those without any appearance of stratification? why do these layers of rock lie flat, and why are these other tilted up? What are the causes which led to the results which lie before our eyes? Can we from what we see argue to what we do not see? And when we pick up bits of rock, and find imbedded in them or stamped upon them the forms of shells, or bones, or fish, or fern, we cannot help being curious as to the

origin of these appearances, and are perhaps carried back through multitudinous ages in our endeavours to reach the cause of what we see before our eyes. Any how we are quite sure that the effects which we see have a cause.

In like manner with regard to any spoken language. If we find any peculiarities of grammar or syntax, any marked resemblance to some other language, with marked differences also, any particular feature common to the language of peoples who are now very widely separated, or an entire difference between the forms of speech of people which are now contiguous, our curiosity is excited, and we set to work to try and discover the causes which have produced these effects. But any how we are quite sure that the effects have a cause. And if in these or any other like cases, which of course might be multiplied indefinitely in every department of knowledge, we do hit upon some cause which exactly accounts for the effects which we see, and without which it seems impossible that the effects could have been produced—as for instance, the rise or subsidence of water in our geological illustration,—and emigration, mixture of races, conquest and so on, in our philological illustration—then we feel reasonably sure that we have hit upon the true causes of what we see, and are almost as certain



of the truth of the cause which we see only in its effect, as we are of the effect itself before our eyes.

And if it should so happen that the existence of the cause which we found out from its effect should be witnessed to us in some wholly independent way—as e. g. certain supposed geological processes are confirmed by what is observed to be actually going on at the present day—and the inferences from the condition, say, of the English language are confirmed by historical notices of the movements of Britons, Romans, Saxons, and Normans—then our conviction of the reality of the cause is equal to our knowledge of the reality of the effect.

Now if we take our stand on the mountain of observation in this nineteenth century of the Christian era, and observe the religious condition of the nations which make up the families of the earth we shall become aware of the following phenomena.

About a quarter (roughly speaking) of the whole human race are Christians. All the nations which are foremost in civilization are Christians. Wherever liberty, humanity, justice, good government, righteous laws, are found, the nation 'is Christian. Wherever philosophy, science, literature, art, morality, the sanctity of

marriage, the family tie, have struck their roots deep into any land, it is a Christian land. People of the most different temperaments, of different forms of government, and diverse political institutions, speaking different languages, living under the most various conditions of climate, of territory, of civil power, all agree in this that they are Christians. Their laws, their national genius, their intellectual conformation, their style of thought and of composition, may be as remote as the poles, and yet they are at one in this, they believe in and accept the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or if, narrowing our observation from the survey of nations to the consideration of individual men, we inquire into the religious belief of some of the most eminent statesmen, lawyers, soldiers, historians, poets, merchants, philosophers, scholars, of our own and preceding ages, we find that with all the variety of intellectual gifts which distinguished them they had this in common, a firmly rooted faith in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are incited, therefore, to search out the cause of this singular influence and wide-spread power of the Christian religion, and, with this view, to trace back its history, the history of its rise and spread and progress in the world. We

find, then, on inquiry that Christianity has ever been spread by missionaries. The manner of its propagation, from land to land, through a course of eighteen centuries has been that, wherever it was planted, there has always sprung up a number of men who have thought it worth their while to leave their native land, and to go forth into strange lands for the simple purpose of making it known to them. And it has been a feature common to all these missionaries that they have risked, and often actually lost, their lives, for the sake of imparting the knowledge of the Gospel to people who were without that knowledge. I must ask you especially to note this feature common to all missionaries, from the first preachers of the Gospel to the last martyr in Melanesia. This sustained enthusiasm, through eighteen hundred years, is a very remarkable feature both as cause and effect in the inquiry which we are pursuing. Well, then! we find that the VERY SAME ENTHUSIASM which now keeps alive the Moravian Missions to Greenland and the Esquimaux, the English Missions to India, Polynesia, China, Africa, North-West America, and elsewhere, the missions of the *Propaganda* of the Church of Rome, the various missions from the United States of America, and whatever other missionary effort

is now being made by Christian people through the wide world, also sent Greek missionaries into Russia in the tenth century, and English missionaries into Germany in the eighth century, and Irish and Italian missionaries into Britain in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, and so early as the second and third centuries after Christ had sent messengers of the Gospel of Peace into every known land in the Roman and barbarian world, as Tertullian tells us. And if we go on to ask where these men of the second and third centuries got their enthusiasm from, we are led back through scenes of violence and bloodshed and persecution, through histories of wholesale martyrdoms, imprisonments, burnings, confiscation of goods, crucifixions, and deaths by wild beasts (all designed to quench it), till we stand, as it were, face to face with the Apostles of Christ, and come to the very source and spring-head of that stream of evangelization of which we see the actual results in the Christianity of the present day. But how can we account for the enthusiasm of the apostles? and what could it have sprung from?

Jesus Christ of Nazareth was crucified at Jerusalem about the eighteenth or nineteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. For three or three and a half years previously He had

gathered around Him a band of Apostles and other disciples, and was their recognized Head, their Lord and Master. During this time He had assiduously taught them the things of the Kingdom of God, and their hopes of that Kingdom and of its near approach had been wound up to the highest pitch. We have only to read the simple and inartificial narratives in the four Gospels of the Lord's teaching, of His mighty works, of the confession of Peter, of the request of the sons of Zebedee, of the intimate yet most reverential intercourse of the disciples with Christ, of the scene of the Transfiguration, of the questionings as to the time of His coming, and, generally, of the entire surrender of themselves to the service of Jesus in utter disregard of their own worldly callings,—to perceive how entirely the hopes of the disciples were centered in the promised Kingdom of Christ, and how entirely those hopes rested on the Person of Jesus Himself. Well! as I have said, Jesus Christ was crucified. At the early age of thirty-three years His wonderful life ended in a shameful and painful death, amidst the jeers and mockings of His enemies. Deserted by His disciples, easily crushed by His foes, unaided, unfriended, forsaken alike by God and man,<sup>1</sup> He went down to

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxii. 1. Matt. xxvii. 46; xxvi. 56.

the silent and remorseless grave; and the bars and bolts of that grave were fastened upon Him! Try and picture to yourselves the utter disconsolateness of that hour of darkness. The sword that pierced the mother's heart; the agonies of the weeping women who saw Him die! the broken hopes of the disciples strewing the ground like fragments of an earthen vessel dashed to shivers! their blank despair; their sinking hearts; their agonizing grief; their courage melting like wax in the midst of their bowels!

But leap over fifty days, and what do you see? Those same disciples, those same women, brought together again; the disciples no longer trembling, no longer desponding, no longer crouching and hiding from their enemies, but with burning enthusiasm, with undaunted courage, with irresistible power, standing before the multitude and preaching forgiveness and salvation by Jesus Christ. We see them commencing an assault against sin, against the power of the world, and against the world's favourite lies, which has gone on ever since, and will go on while the world lasts; and all in the name of Jesus Christ. We hear them (beginning at Jerusalem, still reeking with the blood of the Crucified) proclaiming that Jesus was the Christ, and gathering to themselves thousands of those

who saw Him die to trust in Him for life, and to die, if need were, for His Name's sake. We see them with all the vigour of conquest pressing forward from place to place, adding numbers to their body wherever they went, till in a few years Churches called by the name of Christ were planted through Asia and Europe. We see them communicating their enthusiasm and their hopes to others who came after them, and we have seen this enthusiasm and these hopes burning steadily for eighteen centuries. Ay, lift up your eyes and see that same fire burning brightly among ourselves. Our hope, here in London, here in the nineteenth century, is still fixed on Him that was crucified; we believe in Him, we love Him, we are ready, if needs be, to die for Him; and we are still, with the flush of victory on our brow, carrying the war into the enemy's country, in the full confidence that the idolatries and superstitions, as well as the atheism and infidelity of the world, will in due time fall before the Gospel of Christ, and that every knee shall bow at the Name of Jesus, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now how can you account for this? All this is not the logical sequence of the crucifixion. This enthusiasm, this effort of sustained

power, lasting through many centuries, is not the natural fruit of helpless weakness and failure and discomfiture in the leader, and withering disappointment of the sanguine hopes of the followers. Shame and death and the grave are not the natural parents of exultation and vital power and victory. Given the death upon the cross, and the triumphant progress of the Gospel from the first day until now, how can you connect the two, and tie the latter to the former? If the weeping women had seen the risen Lord when they came to seek His body in the tomb; if the Apostles had found the sepulchre empty, and had been accosted by the living voice of Him who had been the tenant of the grave; if the disciples had seen Him, and conversed with Him, and touched Him, and eaten with Him through a period of many days; if He had explained to them the Scriptures, and shown them how His death and rising from the dead were in the eternal counsels of God a necessary preparation for His promised kingdom; if in the living presence of Him who had been crucified they saw the fulfilment of the familiar Scripture, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption;" and if they beheld in His resurrection the sure pledge of sin forgiven,



and man reconciled to God, and death destroyed, and heaven opened to all believers—then we can understand how the down-trodden spirits sprung up to life and victory, how the weak became strong, how the fearful became bold, how the runaways rushed to the charge and carried the world before them. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, then, would account for the enthusiasm of the Apostles and first Evangelists, and for the present place which Christianity holds in the world, and I know not that anything else would.

For let us for a moment put ourselves in the place of the Apostles, and imagine what must have been their feelings if their knowledge of Jesus Christ had ended with His death and burial. They had followed Him incessantly for upwards of three years; their minds had been nurtured with lofty thoughts concerning His power, and raised from cares about boats and fish to the prospect of thrones and an eternal kingdom. Encouraged by His miraculous works, no less than by His words and His mysterious grandeur, they had put implicit trust in Him. They felt His superiority; they leant confidently on His arm. In His presence they felt safe. He explained their difficulties, He composed their strife, He silenced their adversaries, He

bore them harmless through the tumults of men, as well as amidst roaring winds and foaming waves. But of a sudden their sense of security was shaken, unusual signs of agitation had clouded the Master's brow and troubled His speech. Strange words had been spoken by Him at the Paschal Feast, and disquietude had disturbed their breasts. Then the night of Gethsemane came. The sacred person of their Master was rudely seized; the soldiers bound Him and carried Him off a helpless prisoner. In the house of the high priest, in the hall of Pilate, blow succeeded to blow, insult to insult, shame to shame; the council condemned Him; Herod set Him at nought; Pontius Pilate passed sentence upon Him; He was scourged, crowned with thorns, spit upon, led out to die. The cross was reared aloft; He is nailed to it; He hangs in helpless agony; He cries with a loud voice, but no help comes to Him—He cries again—and then He dies. And He is taken down from the cross, and He is laid in the tomb, and the darkness and stillness of the grave close around Him. Now, I say, if the history of Christ had stopped here, if this had been the only sequel to the magnificent discourses and prophetic utterances of Jesus Christ and to the hopes engendered by them in the

breasts of His disciples ; if Christ's enemies had been thus left victorious, and He Himself had been thus left vanquished and discredited, only one result seems possible : that Peter and John should have returned to their boats and their obscurity on the Lake of Galilee, that the little company which had followed Jesus should have been broken up, and that Christianity should have died in the birth. And therefore the only possible explanation of the phenomena of the rise and spread of Christianity is that Christ rose from the dead, as the creed of the Church proclaims that He did, and has proclaimed successively through eighteen hundred years.

And now let us notice further how entirely this inference is borne out :—

(1) By the historical testimony to Christ's resurrection ; (2) by the place which the resurrection holds in apostolic preaching.

(1.) It is no exaggeration to say that no historical event is ascertained by such a weight of testimony as the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is. The persons who saw Him alive after His death upon the cross were those who had lived in the closest intimacy and in daily and hourly intercourse with Him for at least three years before His death. They saw Him after His resurrection, not once or twice,

but during a period of forty days, and in the very place, in Galilee, where He had appointed to meet them. They saw Him, not only one by one, but two, seven, ten, eleven, five hundred simultaneously. They not only saw Him, but they heard Him speak, and received from Him long and careful instructions as to their future conduct. They spoke to Him and received His answers; they touched Him and handled Him; they did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. They could not, therefore, by any possibility be deceived. Then their whole conduct to the day of their death showed their entire and absolute certainty of Christ's resurrection. Their whole life was a steady, firm, unwavering testimony to the fact that Christ was risen. The resurrection of Christ shaped and fashioned and coloured the whole course of their thoughts, words, affections, actions, till they died, and it turned their death into life. The prayer of Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," was the expression of what they all felt in the hour of death.

Then again the announcement of Christ's resurrection was made on the very spot where He died, to the very men who crucified Him, within a few weeks of His death. Not in a

distant land, not to strangers, not years after the event, but then and there : announced at the risk of the lives of those who announced it ; but with the effect of winning thousands to the same belief.

And once more the books which speak of the resurrection are the authentic works either of eye-witnesses of what they relate, as St. Matthew, St. John, St. Peter, St. Paul, or of the companions of such, who had the best and surest information, as St. Luke, and St. Mark. What historical event—the battle of Marathon, the death of Cæsar, the Norman Conquest—has such an array of evidence to support it ? And this historical evidence, you will remember, comes up in support of the independent argument that nothing but the resurrection of Christ can account for the facts of the rise and extension of Christianity.

(2.) Our inference that the resurrection of Christ lay at the root of the rise and spread of the Christian faith, is borne out also by the place which that doctrine holds in the Apostolic preaching.

If it really was the having seen the Lord Jesus alive which inspired the Apostles with energy and courage to preach the Gospel of Him who had been crucified, we should, of

course, expect to find their speech full of such a wonderful and heart-stirring truth. The event which had turned their weakness into strength, their despair into hope, and their sorrow into joy, would of course be ever on their lips; and they would feel that the whole strength of their cause depended upon it. In other words, we may confidently look for a proof of the correctness of our inference that the Apostles' enthusiastic boldness sprung from their knowledge of the Lord's resurrection in the language of their sermons and addresses. If those sermons and addresses are not full of the resurrection, then there is a contradiction to our hypothesis, there is something which we cannot explain. Let us then see how the matter stands.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles has preserved to us a record of the first Apostolic preaching. On the first Pentecost after the offering of the true Paschal Lamb, St. Peter, who seven weeks before had thrice denied Christ for fear of a servant-girl, was standing before a vast multitude of Jews assembled from all quarters of the world, and among them the very men who had taken part in crucifying the Lord. And what did he say to them? "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth . . . being delivered by the determi-

nate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain : whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that He should be holden of it"—and then, going on to expound the sixteenth Psalm as speaking of "the resurrection of Christ," he adds, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."<sup>2</sup> The next recorded discourse is in the same strain. "God hath glorified His Son Jesus. . . . Ye killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses."<sup>3</sup> The next chapter finds them prisoners for "preaching through Jesus the resurrection from the dead : " and, when brought on their trial before Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priests, what was their defence ? "Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole." And they added, "There is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."<sup>4</sup> The next chapter finds them in prison again, but no sooner are they at

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 22—32.<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 13—15.<sup>4</sup> Acts iv. 2, 10, 12. See also ver. 33.

liberty, and brought again before the High Priest than they answer their accusers, saying, "The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree . . . and we are witnesses of these things."<sup>5</sup> We pass on, and we find St. Peter sent to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, but his testimony is still the same: that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; that the Jews slew Him and hanged Him on a tree; but that "God raised Him up and showed Him openly . . . unto witnesses chosen before of God, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead."<sup>6</sup> And when the scene changes, and it is no longer St. Peter but St. Paul who is the preacher, the matter is still the same: "They took Him down from the cross, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead, and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people." And again: "The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again." And once more: "He whom God raised up saw no corruption."<sup>7</sup>

But we need not pursue this subject further.

<sup>5</sup> Acts v. 30. <sup>6</sup> Acts x. 38—41. <sup>7</sup> Acts xiii. 29—37.



You can see for yourselves in the remaining records of the preaching of St. Paul, in his Epistles, and in the Epistles of St. Peter; whether or no the resurrection of Christ from the dead occupies that place in Apostolic preaching, which on our hypothesis we should expect it to do, and so whether or no it supports our inference that what lies at the root of the rise and spread of Christianity is the truth of our Lord's resurrection.

But there is another line of argument by which we may also infer the truth of the resurrection from the rise and continuance of Christianity in the world. The preceding argument has shown that nothing but the fact that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead can account for the boldness, the energy, and the power, with which the Apostles proclaimed that resurrection, and dwelt upon it in their letters to the Churches. But for all their zeal and daring, it might have been that the fire of their testimony had been quenched in their blood before it spread and took hold in the world. Their eloquent tongues might have been silenced by the sword, their eloquent writings might have been burnt by the hangman's hand, before men's hearts had been touched and enlightened by them. There was no lack of will in

Ananias and Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrim of the day, to crush the preachers of the resurrection, and to bury their doctrine in prisons or in the grave; nor was there any lack of will in the Roman rulers of the world for three hundred years to extirpate a "pernicious superstition,"<sup>8</sup> and to stamp out the plague of the doctrine of Christ. Stephen was stoned,<sup>9</sup> and James was beheaded, and Peter was cast into prison,<sup>1</sup> and Paul was sent to Rome for his trial,<sup>2</sup> and Ignatius was given to the wild beasts, and Polycarp was burnt alive,<sup>3</sup> and the Christians at Rome were tortured to death by thousands by Nero,<sup>4</sup> and Pliny condemned every Christian that was brought before him,<sup>5</sup> and the Antonines and Severus and Decius and Diocletian let slip the dogs of persecution to exterminate the believers in Jesus Christ;<sup>6</sup> but for all that the faith was preserved, the Church grew, disciples were multiplied, and the Christian world is what it is at this present day. Who has watched over His Church from age to age? Who has preserved the faith in the hollow of

<sup>8</sup> Tacitus, *Annal.* xv. 44.

<sup>9</sup> Acts vii. 59.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xii. 2—4.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxv. 12, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Euseb. *E. H.* iii. 36, iv. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus as above.

<sup>5</sup> Pliny's *Letters*, x. 97, 98.

<sup>6</sup> Euseb. *E. H.*; Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," ch. xvi., &c.

His hand? Who encouraged Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom by the vision of His glory? Who brought St. Peter out of prison? Who separated St. Paul to be a chosen vessel to bear His name to the Gentiles, and stood by him in every conflict? Who has been the hope and the joy and the strength of every martyr from the first day until now? And who has defeated all the powers of darkness, and ever fed the flickering lamp of His Church with the fresh oil of His Holy Spirit? Surely not one who sleeps in the grave; surely not one who is holden by the pains of death, and who has seen corruption; surely not one whom the world has overcome, and upon whom the keys of death and of hell have been turned by a hand stronger than his to keep him prisoner: but One who is risen from the dead, One who is the Lord of life, One over whom death has no more dominion, One who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. Undoubtedly in the consolidation of the Church, and its extension among the Gentiles before the destruction of Jerusalem; in its marvellous preservation and increase through three centuries of exterminating persecution, and no less in the tender-

care which has never ceased to watch over it down to the present hour, we have no mean proof of the resurrection of the Founder of our faith, no weak testimony that He who died for our sins, rose again from the dead, and ever liveth as the Saviour of His people, to guard and to guide and to bless them for ever.

Lastly, let me exhort you to seek each one for himself, that conclusive evidence of Christ's resurrection which lies in our being risen with Christ, and seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The intellect may be warped, the reason may lose its transparency and be stained by pride, or discoloured by passion, and so be stripped of its power to discern truth; but those who through the fellowship of Christ's resurrection walk in newness of life, and know the exceeding greatness of God's power towards them that believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, they have a witness in themselves of which no gainsayers can deprive them. They feel by daily and hourly experience the exceeding preciousness of their faith, they enjoy the solid comfort of the forgiveness of sins; but they know that if Christ be not raised their faith is

vain, they are yet in their sins. And so they live in close communion with their risen and exalted Saviour. Be this your happy life. Living above the cares and pleasures of the world, living above all the power and influence of sin, living apart from the idle strife and controversies of the day, give to the unbelieving world the testimony which it needs to the truth of Christ's resurrection from the dead, even the witness of a quiet and a holy life, spent in the expectation of His coming again. And "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ;"<sup>7</sup> to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

THE MANNER OF THE  
GROWTH OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM IN  
ACCORDANCE WITH THE DECLARED  
PURPOSE OF ITS FOUNDER.

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"For they shall perceive that it is His work."—PSALM  
lxiv. 9.

THIS prophetic Scripture applies to the general course of God's providential dealings with His servants, and especially His children in the Gospel covenant—His Church.

They describe exactly the character of the events which have marked the progress of His kingdom upon earth—the apparent failure and delay—the growing doubt and impatience of believers—and finally the triumph of grateful conviction and admiring wonder when the consummation has arrived. "All men that see it shall say, This hath God done; for they shall perceive that it is His work."

It might be supposed that it was the miraculous character of the work here so directly

ascribed to God Himself which was to be the cause of the conviction that it was Divine; but the reverse is the fact, and it was from the very first the employment of human instrumentality, which was the distinguishing feature of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Go ye into all the world," He had said to His Apostles, "and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15); and whilst miracles undoubtedly were promised as among the credentials of those thus commissioned, it is clear that they were to be of brief duration—once fulfilled to those who received in their own persons the original commission, their use expired. Thus the promise, "These signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover," is to be read in conjunction with the inspired history. The power granted to St. Peter and the other Apostles as recorded in the Acts abundantly confirms the Lord's promise; but this done, Holy Scripture itself prepares us for the withdrawal of signs, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall

vanish away " (1 Cor. xiii. 8)—unlike His own abiding presence and aid, " Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world " (Matt. xxviii. 20). We might, indeed, infer from the very nature of miracles, that they must be exceptional and temporary. Their introduction as a permanent aid to faith would rather militate against its soundness and its reality ; and whilst not unreasonably to be expected in the earlier stage of a Divine Revelation, they would be almost injurious, and become actually improbable, in its later operation.

This is, indeed, one of the fallacies often put forward by opponents. " Miracles," they urge, " are so utterly unlikely as to be unreasonable, and not to be believed upon ordinary evidence." " True," we reply, " if we were claiming their frequent or perpetual recurrence, but not as accompanying the first delivering of a Divine message, still less when they have been predicted and promised beforehand, as was the case with the Apostolic powers." Their withdrawal, be it observed, is no weakening of the evidence of the Gospel work ; rather, indeed, the contrary, as bringing in the regular and normal carrying out of the Divine plan as promulgated by its Founder, " Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the



Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. xxviii. 19).

This, then, is what we are taught to look for in the very nature of the Church’s existence—a Divine work wrought out by human instruments and on natural laws, those human instruments, doubtless, supernaturally guided and strengthened, as all grace is supernatural, but not in any other sense miraculously empowered or raised above the natural laws of God’s providential government; and this, we must observe, would be a sufficient refutation of all the implied objections to missionary work, that it is unsatisfactory from its want of prompt and evident success; and, if we were now meeting such objections, I have already pointed out what would be an ample rejoinder; but I have to advance further on this line of argument, and to establish that, so far from an objection or a difficulty, it is an evidence of the truth of Christ’s declaration to His disciples, and His Divine foreknowledge of what should come to pass. He said, indeed, “Go and preach the Gospel,” and gave His promise of support and aid—*not of success in any given time or manner*. More than this, He declared that times of difficulty should come, and many a sore trial of faith to His followers. He spoke of His own coming as supervening in such a crisis

of His Church's future: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8.)

It would, indeed, be easy to deal with this view of the subject as meeting possible objections. My present design is to show you that we lose sight of very valuable evidence of the truth of Holy Scripture if we do not attend to the plain indication of what our Lord foresaw was to happen, and what (we may believe) was ever in His mind when addressing the future Apostles as to their service when He should have left them in the flesh. "The kingdom of Heaven," He said, "is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matt. xiii. 33); and in the same wondrous collection of Parables, as we call them, the process of decay and disappearance of the seed in the ground, as the *first* result of human labour, is the prevailing figure. Can we fail to add in thought, as we listen, the long array of anxieties and doubts which the patient husbandman too well knows by experience, the seeming unfruitfulness, the wintry blast, the scathing tempest, the long weeks of black sterility that seem to mock his labour, and make its final result a very miracle in his eyes. The same picture is before us in St. Mark's description

(Mark iv. 26, 27), " So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground ; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he *knoweth not how.*" You say these are familiar figures of common life, yes, but it is the kingdom of God which is being portrayed in these common images of every-day life. The whole earth is a parable. All the laws of nature, as we call them, are one great lesson in things divine to those who will study them, not only as to their own course and rule, but as a Revelation of His counsels who set them in order and maintains them. " He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," said the Great Teacher, as He taught by these parables, but those who listened caught only a few pregnant sentences which the Holy Spirit led them to record. They did not fathom their meaning. We—now that years have been slowly establishing their truth—are beginning to understand it, not for that we are wiser, but that we live in the latter days. What has drawn our attention to the facts, but the cry of impatience and doubt? At last we look, and lo, the fields, if not " white to the harvest," are putting forth signs of life and change. The mass is upheaving, the blade is breaking the dull clods in which it was hidden from the eye so long.

Once it was the cry that we heard, "Come over and help us," now we are amongst you to tell you of help given, and the wants at least of some longing hearts satisfied. Now we can point to churches that have risen in far-off lands; we can hear on the Lord's Day the prayers that go up in many different tongues; the faith once delivered to the saints has been not only maintained against gainsayers, but extended and made known to those whom it had not reached.

I could not select a more appropriate illustration of what I am saying, than the following quotation from the sermon of the Bishop of Madras, preached at the late consecration of the Missionary Bishops for South India:—"When I came to India, in the latter part of 1861, I found about 45,000 native Christians in our Church, besides about 18,000 inquirers or catechumens. There were 33 native clergy, and about 1100 lay-teachers; 63 European Missionaries were also engaged, partly in superintending the native clergy and congregations, partly in education, partly in pressing forward the work of evangelizing the heathen. Year by year these numbers have been growing, with the exception of the European Missionaries. The 63,000 native Christians, with catechumens, have now become

about 100,000. The 33 native clergy have grown to be 106."

And how has this change come about? Was it by some suddenly successful stroke of spiritual policy, or by an almost miraculous power attending preaching? The answer to these questions will contain the very truth I am about to tell you. It has been by slow, almost imperceptible, steps that the victory has been won. The leaven of the Gospel had long lain hid amongst the races whose very souls it is now beginning to excite with a strange spirit of inquiry. "Is there but one God?" "Who is this Christ?" "What must we do to be saved?" Can that be true which you tell us, to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved"? And this is the latest stage at which for a moment I am stopping to glance, for my recollection carries me to such scenes. I have heard such cries, have seen the eager, anxious look, and have thankfully received to baptism those that had recently passed through that momentous change, first from utter unconcern to interest, then to quick searching inquiry—last and best, to glad conviction and happy rest in belief. But these are individual instances. I am telling you of much wider extension of our faith over races and regions. It is not by the simple process of growing con-

viction in a single mind that God works such effects. No error is more common than to limit what is called the success of missionary labour to the actual number of converts made in a given time. See first what has to be done. Ancient creeds that have dominated the minds of nations—their antiquity vouched for by the now crumbling walls of temples older than art, older than history, beneath the influences of which generations have lived and died—these have to be uprooted and to pass away, sometimes before the first seeds can be sown of the faith that takes their place; and it is not with other religions as our own, where the knowledge and acceptance of certain great truths of itself changes the whole man. To be told simply of some new duties could not of itself possess the mind with a new idea of life and duty, as to be told that Christ died for us does possess it. To awake to the fact that we are in a state of sin from which we are offered deliverance, is a new existence, and the hopes that are built on the Gospel promises have at once a power and efficacy of their own; but not so with the cold precepts of Buddhism, even though in part very true and having a grandeur of their own—these work no change. The race that grows up believing them attaches, indeed, certain value to them

by degrees, and customs grow up round them; and when centuries have passed the customs remain, and their permanence is taken for truth until the change comes. *Christianity has brought that change*—a new thought enters and breaks the stillness of the long-continued calm, misgivings begin to shake the satisfaction of those who never doubted or questioned all those long years. But this does not take place in a day or a year, the change is slow and gradual, the customs are altered, observances disappear, an effort is made to restore them, but it fails. Some fall away to erring beliefs, short of the great Truth which has begun to make itself felt; those who are passing through this period often enter into a phase of unbelief—the old creed is dropping away from them before they have grasped the new. At the present time there is a remarkable instance of this in the “Bramo Somaj”—a form of Deism into which many of the rising generation of Indian thinkers have fallen, evidently in their search after Truth—a movement the first seeds of which were sown by missionaries of the gospel (I am not speaking of the direct efforts of these good men) in the preaching of the great saving truths, which would have satisfied all these longings of disturbed minds, but their words did not reach those I speak

of, except in the form of comment, and the questioning that follows the promulgation of any new striking idea. Now this is exactly what Christianity has produced in the East. Many that have not met with Christians have heard of their words. Some have seen the Scriptures, and even the opposition to the new doctrine which is excited leads to its dissemination ; and the indifferent are awakened from their unconcern and are unwillingly drawn into the controversy. It is not as the careless critics of our own side suppose—and alas ! as many a zealous Missionary labourer finds in his weariness the thought suggest itself—that the effect of preaching is ended when the crowd of hearers separates. It may be too often the case with the so-called Christian congregation. A few passing comments on what has been said, and each returns to his previous state of thought and life. The effect of Christian teaching in a heathen country is widely different ; it is with those who hear of its truth for the first time that this conflict of thought surely follows. As the Lord Himself said, “ I came not to bring peace, but a sword.” You say this means only the religious division that ensues. It is far more true of the effect on each separate heart and mind, and it is not only the individual choice between truth and



error that has to be made after hearing; it is the carrying to and fro of the word of power that, once originated, goes on by a law which depends not on our will or knowledge. It is as with some seeds that are borne with the wind to far-off seas, and carried upon the waves to some distant shore, and their fruit is gathered at a distance. The living Word of the Gospel is not to be judged and known as to its power in its first effects, great as these have been, and are sometimes still. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). In the words of the Prophet (Isaiah xxviii. 9, 10), "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? . . . Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

Such words are often understood to apply only to the teaching of individual minds. And it is not to contradict such application that I apply them in a wider sense to the growth of Christianity in the conviction of a whole people. In the latter case, moreover, there are all the attendant circumstances, the incidental evidences, I may call

them, of the truth of the religion, in the higher civilization to which it leads, the many points of reasonable superiority which it brings. It is not in our days even as it was in those of the Apostle, when unlearned and ignorant men spake the words of life. They, too, had miracles, and an inspiration of which we have but the record. We have, nevertheless, a compensation in what has grown up around our faith in the altered condition of the nations that have embraced it. And even as to miracles, we have aids in our actual labour which may rank only secondary to miracles—take the case of language;—as a fact, though “tongues have ceased,” the learning to speak to many races in their own tongue is a thing still to be described almost in the words of the Acts,—“Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts ii. 9—11).

My conclusion, brethren, from these considerations is, first, that not only is it an actual error to assume, as so many do, that

because our Missionary success is not so rapid or so astonishing in its features as that of Apostolic days it is therefore less real, or less certainly the work of God Himself, brought about as He has designed it should be; but that the gradual and what we may call natural mode of its being attained and won is a distinct manifestation of the truth of the Scriptures which foretell it. It is as plainly and as frequently written that "the Kingdom of Heaven shall grow like"—"seed" or "leaven"—as that "signs shall follow those that believe." The Apostolic age fulfilled the one set of Scriptures; the long array of years, in which since that day the Gospel has been slowly extending itself by ordinary means, subject to all the seeming chances and real delays, to which human efforts are ever liable, are just as fully an evidence of the truth of Holy Writ and a sign and note of Divine co-operation and acceptance as the early conversions that followed the resurrection itself; and they are a growing evidence, fuller each day and year that comes round. The missionary work of the last half-century is well-nigh miraculous; compare the actual result with the weak, desultory effort, often ill-considered and ill-planned, and yet observe the regular advancing tide of conviction that has followed, and the words of

the Psalmist are not too strong to describe it, —nay, the very form of expression seems to point to such a proof as I am now setting before you, one that does not strike at first sight, but after a time—after long inattention and (it may be) actual doubt “they shall *perceive* that it is His work.” Is not, we may ask, that day well-nigh fully come? When the Churches of our own communion have trebled in number since we can remember, when around them have gathered other Christian communities less perfect in their organization as Churches—but still Christian—their members believing the same Lord, the barrier of their differences one that may disappear in a day, so soon as the strong breath of the Spirit of Unity shall breathe on them and on us, the agreement one that shall connect us for ever in bonds of unbroken, everlasting love. And this will be the last great evidence of the Divine Presence with us, the crowning proof which will convince gainsayers as it will gladden and confirm believers in their faith, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John xiii. 35).

THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES  
A STANDING MONUMENT AND EVIDENCE  
OF THE  
DIVINE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

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"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."—JOHN v. 39.

THE twenty-seven books that comprise the New Testament were, in all probability, produced in a period of about fifty years, that is to say, between A.D. 50 and A.D. 100. We might perhaps even make it a little less, and say forty-five. Or if, rejecting the computation which has traditionally been received, and giving full scope to the spirit of doubt and questioning that has flourished so much of late, we double the former number and say one hundred, we shall nearly have reached the utmost limits that can reasonably be assigned to the composition of any parts of the New Testament. In all reasonable likelihood the bulk of the New Testament, as we have it now, was

in existence in the year of our Lord 150, and all critics are agreed that many portions were written eighty or ninety years before.

These twenty-seven books of the New Testament may be roughly divided in a threefold manner, as the Jews divided the Scriptures of the Old Testament under the threefold classification of Law, Prophets, and Psalms. For it would not be unnatural to classify the books of the New Testament under the head of the Epistles of St. Paul, the Gospels, and the other writings. The Epistles of St. Paul stand first, because they are admitted on all hands to be genuine, and because several of them were probably written before some, if not all, of the Gospels. The four Gospels may be placed next, because of their close connexion as to subject-matter; while the other miscellaneous writings, such as the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Revelation and the Catholic Epistles, may be thrown together by themselves, not because of any inherent connexion with one another, but because they are disconnected with the Pauline Epistles and the Gospels; much in the same way as the Psalms and the Books of Chronicles, or that of Esther, were thrown together by the Jews under the common name of Sacred writings. All these books, however, have a very close relation, be-

cause they all alike deal either with the life of Christ, or with the life of the Christian Church. With the exception of these books, there are scarcely any of a like antiquity that are concerned with the life of the Christian Church, and none at all that deal with the life of Christ.

It is not necessary to enter here into the questions of the inspiration or the canonicity of these books. Their inspiration, however that term may ultimately be defined, will stand or fall by the intrinsic and inherent evidence that may be adduced for it, and their canonicity must resolve itself into the ground there is for believing them to be genuine and authentic. If, for example, the Epistles of St. Paul are genuine, and if the Gospels are authentic, they must be canonical, though it is conceivable that both may have been accepted as canonical without being genuine in the one case, or authentic in the other. All we have to deal with now is the fact of the existence of these writings at a very early period of the history of the Christian Church. The bulk of them was unquestionably in existence in the middle of the second century; and several of the most important are known to have been in existence shortly after the middle of the first.

Let us then take these three classes of writ-

ings in order, beginning with the Epistles of St. Paul.

I. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians were written as early as twenty-one or twenty-two years after the death of Christ; the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians were written, and are known to have been written, within thirty years after that event. They are known also to have been written by St. Paul. St. Paul is known to have been brought up a Jew. It is certain that, on becoming a Christian, he exposed himself to, and incurred the bitter animosity and persecution of his own countrymen. It is certain that he had himself at one time persecuted the people whose society he afterwards joined. But it is clear from his own writings that long before the year 60 A.D., that is, within thirty years of the death of Christ, the knowledge of what he termed the Gospel had extended throughout Asia Minor, had penetrated into Greece, and had even advanced as far as Rome; and this was owing in no small degree to his personal exertions, to his own energy and zeal, and to those of his associates. We have then historic and documentary evidence of the very highest kind that a large and important society existed throughout the world in various centres and regions within one generation of the death



of Christ, consisting of persons of all ranks and degrees, who were bound together by a common faith in a person whom they had never seen, and who considered that common faith to be a sufficient bond between places so widely separated as Corinth and Jerusalem, and a sufficient motive for breaking loose from the associations and the customs of heathenism.

There is no stronger proof or illustration of the nature of this bond, its tenacity and far-reaching influence, than the mere existence of that letter which was written by St. Paul to the Romans, and sent to a place where he had never been, and to a people whom he did not know. The whole circle of human literature can produce no corresponding instance of a document addressed by one man, to a body of men between whom there was no natural or necessary connexion, the only relation being a moral, and the only bond a spiritual one. If we ask what it was that had created this unusual and unexampled result, we can only reply that it was a common belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Epistles of St. Paul leave us no doubt as to the nature of this belief; all alike show that the belief was one in a person who had been crucified, but though crucified had risen again from the dead, and was worshipped as the Son of God, and recognized

as the Messiah for whom the Jews had looked. It is absolutely certain that the Churches of Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Rome, were alike in this belief; their very existence as Churches was not otherwise to be accounted for. And although a period of thirty years is a very short time for a belief like this to have extended so far, it is evident from the same writings that it had been growing for many years, and was no new thing. It is clear that St. Paul had himself been a Christian for some twenty years or more; and there is no evidence that when he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, his belief concerning Jesus Christ was other than it had been at first. On the contrary, it is evident from that Epistle that it was unchanged. And it is also evident that the faith of St. Paul was, in the main, the faith likewise of those to whom he wrote, whether in Rome, Corinth, or Galatia. The problem, therefore, that we have to account for is, the existence of these several Churches at this early period, and the fact of their conversion from heathenism to the faith of Christ. How was it that they had all learnt to believe in One who was crucified, as the Son of God? Because that this was their uniform belief is a matter not to be questioned.

First, then, it is very clear that their belief

must have had an historic foundation. It is simply impossible that, in a space of time so short as that which intervened between the year 30 and the year 60, the story of the life and death of Christ as a mere fabrication can have grown up. And it is even more manifestly impossible that in the few years, ten at the utmost, that intervened between the supposed death of Jesus and the conversion of Saul, the same story can have originated. Added to which it must be borne in mind, that a considerable portion of that interval, whatever its length may have been, had been spent by him in energetic persecution of the Christians. We may assume, therefore, that he knew what the story was that he was striving to put down, that it was not a mere fabrication, because that might have been left to die of itself. He must have known, at all events, whether or not the crucifixion was a fact; he must have known whether or not Christ was alleged to have risen again. The persecution, no less than the conversion, of Saul of Tarsus, is not to be accounted for on the supposition of the history of Jesus having had no foundation in fact. St. Paul, no doubt, was perfectly conversant with the main circumstances of the crucifixion long before he became a Christian. He was himself, in all probability, one of those Jews to whom the

Cross of Christ was a stumbling-block. We may therefore regard it as proved, as far as any historical fact can be proved, that Jesus Christ was put to death by crucifixion. We have, therefore, as a true historic foundation on which to build, the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

The question therefore arises, How did it come to pass that a man who underwent such a death, was accepted primarily by a person like St. Paul, and afterwards by the Churches throughout the world, as the promised Messiah and the Son of God? If the crucified Jesus was so accepted, why not any one else? Why not one of those, for instance, who were crucified with Him? Clearly because, in the case of Jesus Christ, there must historically have been other circumstances and conditions, which made it possible for such a belief to attach to Him and not to any one else. There must have been, as a matter of necessity, certain features about His life or about His death, or certain circumstances which transpired after His death, or both, which made it possible that, in His case, the belief should arise and gain ground that He was the Christ and the Son of God. And as a matter of fact we know, that wherever St. Paul preached, and whenever he wrote, he insisted upon this fact, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. What, therefore,

to St. Paul was the evidence of the resurrection? We must not forget that, as a Jew and an energetic persecutor of the Christians, he would naturally be familiar with all that had been urged against the resurrection. But we must not forget also, that he had had opportunities of examining the original witnesses of it, and indeed was able, many years afterwards, to quote the living testimony of some three hundred persons who had seen Jesus Christ after He had risen from the dead.<sup>1</sup> This was, strictly speaking, the extent of the *natural* evidence to which he was able to appeal, but it was not the evidence upon which he chiefly relied. This was principally twofold; the knowledge that the crucified Jesus had made him, Paul, conscious of His existence; and the knowledge that upon belief in Him he had been animated by a new spirit, and had been made a new man, having a sense which he had never had before of the forgiveness of sin, and of complete personal righteousness. It was this twofold experience which had been able to overcome all his former prejudice, and had convinced him that the testimony of the original witnesses of the resurrection was to be accepted; and, upon this conviction, matured as it was by a long

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

course of Christian conduct, he went forth and was able to convert the world to a belief in that man whom he had once persecuted, but had now learned to adore as his Saviour and his God. We may consequently accept St. Paul as a fair criterion of the validity of the evidence that Jesus was the Christ, and we may certainly regard the Churches, to whom he preached with so much success, as fair judges likewise of the nature of that evidence. It is unreasonable to imagine that *all* the members of those Churches were imposed upon. There may have been among them persons of feeble judgment, but they were not all so, and the great number of the converts and their variety of character, is a fair index of the strength of the evidence presented. It follows, therefore, that the Christian Scriptures, as far as they are represented by St. Paul's Epistles, are a standing evidence of the Divine Mission of Jesus Christ, because they are a proof of the wide-spread influence of a particular teaching about Jesus Christ, which had nothing whatever to commend it but its inherent truth. There was nothing naturally in the death of Christ to work the marvellous results which we see were wrought, unless that death was in its nature different from all others. The only evidence of its being different from all

others, consisted in the personal life and character of Jesus Christ, the peculiar circumstances of His death, and the reason there was for believing that it was followed by His resurrection. Any one of these elements alone would have been insufficient to produce the results which followed; it was the *combination* only that produced them. Unless, therefore, it can be shown that there was that in the story itself, apart altogether from its truth, that was calculated to produce them, we must, of necessity, accept the results produced, of which St. Paul's Epistles are an abiding witness, as a natural and sufficient proof of the vitality and reality of the cause producing them. And if it is alleged that the story itself, apart from its truth, was a sufficient cause, then we may fairly ask for any second instance of a similar, but fabricated story, producing the like results. Not only can this, however, not be given, but it is not possible to produce any similar story that shall even approximately fulfil the conditions that this fulfils. For as much, therefore, as we have got a unique *story*, for the several parts of which there is unique evidence, and for as much as we have in our hands the evidence of the original *working* of this story, we can only conclude that the method in which it worked

affords the strongest possible confirmation of the fact that the story was inherently calculated to bring about the results it wrought. But it would have been inherently disqualified to do so, unless it had been true.

II. The next portion of the New Testament that we have to deal with is the Gospel record. This has been preserved to us in a four-fold narrative. Two of the Gospels only are traditionally assigned to eyewitnesses of our Lord's life, those, namely, of St. Matthew and St. John. It should, however, always be remembered that no Gospel but the last *claims* to have been written by an eyewitness. That Gospel clearly does, but the third Gospel expressly disclaims it, and for the first and second we have nothing but tradition to fall back upon. It will, however, scarcely be denied that all our Gospels were in existence A.D. 150, and the question therefore arises whether, supposing them to have originated shortly before that time, the tide of concurrent testimony in their favour could have been so strong as it is, and also whether there are any persons in the second century who can be regarded as at all likely to have written them. And this being so, the probability of the universal tradition concerning their being correct is enormously increased.



Only let it not be forgotten that the wholly anonymous character of three of the Gospels absolves us from the necessity of regarding the question of their authenticity, that is their accuracy, as involved necessarily in that of their genuineness, or their claim to be regarded as the work of the writers whose name they bear. They may or may not have been written respectively by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and yet may be trustworthy narratives of the events they record. They can hardly have been written by them and not be so. But if it could be shown to be highly probable that the three first Gospels were not by the writers whose names they bear, that would not necessarily destroy their credibility, because they make no claim themselves to have been so written; if, on the other hand, they came before us as the work of those writers, and *then* were proved to have been not written by them, we could no longer accept their testimony as credible. This, however, is not the case.

Two points strike us at once with respect to the Gospels, their similarity and their divergence. Their similarity has suggested the notion of a common origin from which the several writers drew. Of the existence, however, of any such common origin there is

not the shadow of a proof; we can therefore only conclude that the divergence of the several narratives is evidence of their independence. We have therefore in the four Gospels beyond all question the independent testimony of four independent writers. Two of them we may reasonably accept as the work of eyewitnesses, and the other two as the scarcely less valuable records of the traditional writers, St. Mark and St. Luke.

What then is the net result of the Gospel narrative? It gives us testimony as to the life, the death, the resurrection, and the teaching of the Lord Jesus. But it must be borne in mind that on each one of these heads we are not dependent on the Gospels *alone*. On the three first heads the testimony of the Pauline Epistles is independent, conclusive and distinct, and possibly even earlier in date. No evidence can be higher or more direct than theirs. And we may fairly suppose that the practical teaching of St. Paul was intended to reproduce and apply that of Christ. In what, therefore, we may call the kernel or nucleus of the Gospel narrative we are by no means dependent on the Gospels themselves. If, however, they are genuine and authentic, it is of course so much the better for our position. And the mass of traditional

evidence goes distinctly to show that this is the case. Every one of the Gospels, then, represents *the personal character* of the Lord Jesus Christ as the very highest of which human nature or human history has any experience. In this respect there is no divergence in their testimony. Every one of the Gospels represents the Lord Jesus Christ as the worker of *miracles* which no special pleading and no manipulation of the narrative can diminish into works of merely natural and ordinary power. In this respect there is no divergence in their testimony. It is also to be remembered that several incidents in the Gospel narrative of a merely natural character are not to be accounted for unless we assume that there was something in the history of Christ which transcended the limits of the merely human to bring them about; such, for instance, as the opposition He excited, the attention He attracted, the general effect He produced, and the like. But, on the other hand, these mighty works must be taken together with the personal character of Christ, which is what it is on the authority of the Gospels, and which must have been very exalted to account for the influence it exerted long afterwards in Rome, Corinth, and elsewhere. There is abundant evidence in the Gospel narrative to show that our Lord appealed to the mighty

works He wrought, and had a purpose in working them. They become, therefore, an inherent and inseparable part of His personal character which we cannot leave out in any attempt to estimate that character.

Furthermore, notwithstanding considerable variation in detail, all the four Gospels are unanimous in their testimony to the main facts of Christ's death. Some incidents are peculiar to each, but no candid reader can for a moment doubt that the fourfold narrative is an unexaggerated narrative of substantial fact. And all the four Gospels relate that the ultimate cause of the death of Jesus was His claim to be the King of the Jews, or, in other words, that He died because He made Himself the Christ. It is the ostensible purpose of each Gospel to represent Him as the Christ. But considering the antecedent prejudices of the Evangelists, it is not a little remarkable that they should have dwelt so forcibly on the ignominious details of the death of that Man whom they desired to set forth as the Jewish Messiah. It is the death of Christ upon which they have lavished all their confessedly unrivalled power as writers. Other points they have touched with more or less lightness, but here they have accumulated and expended all their skill, as though

they felt that it was the death of their Master which was the real key to His history and His character, and that in His death was laid the foundation of all the truth which was associated with His name. And in this respect they were singularly like him who left it on record unimpeachable and never to be forgotten, as exhibiting the practice of his life. "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him *crucified*." "We preach Christ *crucified*, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Once more, all the Gospels are agreed in the testimony they bear to the *resurrection* of the Lord Jesus. The fourfold original narrative of the mightiest event the world has ever seen is comprised in a record that would occupy less than half a column of the *Times*. The discrepancies of that narrative are often insisted upon. I believe that the more it is tested and scrutinized the more it will be found to endure the strain. But at all events no one can for a moment doubt that it was the intention of each Evangelist to represent the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as an actual reanimation of His human body. And

under the circumstances it may reasonably be questioned whether the resurrection can truly be regarded in any other way. We have therefore thus far the independent testimony of four writers to the life, the character, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and we know from St. Paul's Epistles that all the Churches that were formed within thirty years of those events must have received and believed them materially and substantially as the *Gospels* have recorded them, whether or not they were written at that time or the knowledge of the facts was derived from other sources.

There yet remains, however, one point to be considered with respect to the Gospel testimony, and that is the *teaching* of Christ. Now all the Gospels are consistent in saying that Jesus Christ endeavoured to prepare His disciples at once for His death and His resurrection, and yet all the Gospels are consistent in saying that each event took the disciples by surprise and found them unprepared. Considering who the disciples were, there is every reason to believe that in this last respect the Gospels are correct. As Jews they could not believe that their King would die, as men they could not believe that His death would but be the prelude to His rising

again. We have therefore to determine with ourselves the degree of credence we shall give them in their statements that it was their Master's constant and repeated endeavour to prepare them for both events. And certainly there is no reason why they should have drawn any special attention to their incredulity in these matters, or at least the former of them, unless they had been so prepared. And therefore, unless we accept their narrative as open and straightforward, we cannot avoid implicating them in a very complex and deep-laid falsehood, which must be allowed on the face of it to be totally inconsistent and out of harmony with the apparent tenor of their several narratives. If, however, Christ actually did make known to His disciples many times in the course of His ministry the fact that He should be crucified and rise again, that circumstance must be at once allowed to place these events in an altogether different light. And that He did do so is not altogether dependent upon the mere statement of the Evangelists, but is confirmed by the teaching of His own parables and discourses. In fact, we cannot in our estimate of the character of Christ leave out the amount of evidence there is for the main features of His death, and the unquestionable

fact that He was *alleged* to have risen from the dead. And then it becomes a question whether the known character of Christ is more intelligible with the crucifixion and without the resurrection, but with the known phenomena of the thirty years next following, or whether the resurrection alleged and witnessed to as it is, is not after all the very element that alone satisfactorily explains the moral character of Christ, the nature of His teaching, the facts of His death, and the history of the Church and its known phenomena for the first thirty years after His death. Nay, it even becomes a further question whether, taking all things into consideration, there is any historical event that has a better foundation in known historical circumstances and is more clearly pointed to and suggested by known historic results and consequents, that are left without any adequate cause if that is withdrawn, than the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Seeing then that the four Gospels have come down to us from the first ages of the Church with the unanimous testimony of the whole Christian community, as documents that give the best and only trustworthy narrative of events that so intimately concerned the life of Christendom, must we not hail them as monuments of the



very highest value that have preserved to the world for all ages the portrait of a life and character which to the latest epoch can never be other than it is, and which will always tell its own story and command the trust and allegiance of mankind. Are not these Gospels an abiding witness of the Divine mission of Jesus Christ? That there are great difficulties in them none will wish to deny, that there are many points obscure and uncertain in their history all must admit, that there are questions arising out of them that no investigation will ever solve may be very true. But let us look *away* for a moment, from these difficulties, doubts, and questions to the points about them which are sure and certain, and which no progress of science or advancement of learning can ever make otherwise, and fairly weighing these and accepting the inevitable conclusions to which they shut us up, let us ask ourselves whether with the fourfold record of the life, death, resurrection and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in our hand, and giving our heart honestly and fervently to the study of it, we can do otherwise than bow the knee before the Saviour, and confess with the despairing inquiry of humble faith, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

III. There remains only the third and last portion of the New Testament writings to be briefly touched upon. Of these, perhaps, that of the highest importance is the book of the Acts of the Apostles. This gives us the history of the foundation and growth of the Church of Christ for the first generation after His death. It brings the Apostle of the Gentiles to Rome, the long wished-for object of his desires, and leaves him there in prison. Up to that time all is comparatively clear, then the curtain falls, and all is conjecture and obscurity. The position of the Acts of the Apostles is unique in the New Testament. Written as the book manifestly was by a companion of St. Paul, it not only constitutes the link between the Gospel history and his Epistles but on every ground must be regarded as a priceless record of the time. But what is the evidence that it bears to the Divine Mission of Jesus Christ? It shows the very earliest and immediate results of the preaching of the resurrection. It shows the spontaneous and rapid growth of a body of men, the current of whose whole life was changed by the influence which the belief of that fact had upon their heart and conscience. It gives us the spectacle of a movement till then unexampled in the history of the world. This is so extraordinary as to transcend even the

limits of romance, for no one ever thought of depicting a state of society so remarkable, and yet we know that it has the accuracy and fidelity of truth because of the facts that are evidenced by St. Paul's Epistles. Leaving out altogether the miraculous incidents of the Acts, we have yet to account for the undoubted features of the life and conduct of the men whose actions are there related. That men acted in such a way is most certainly a matter of fact, but how came they to act in such a way? What was the origin? What was the cause? What was the motive? Is it possible to discover any motive or assign any cause, if we leave out the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? Suppose Him never to have existed, or suppose the circumstances of His life, death, or resurrection to have been substantially different from what we see them in the Gospels, is it at all possible to give any explanation of the state of society which is presented to us in the Acts?

Those who attempt to account for the social phenomena of the Acts of the Apostles by the known results of religious revivalism must remember that they do but half account for them so long as they leave unexplained the particular time at which these strange phenomena were

manifested. It is undeniable that the greatest religious revival on record spread rapidly over the most enlightened portions of Europe and Asia in the broad daylight of an historical period within the first generation after the death of Christ, and that it did so in direct relation to His death and alleged resurrection. This was declared and acknowledged by all who were the most concerned in the movement to be the immediate cause of it; and unless any other cause more probable can be produced, it must be so accepted; but then, in that case, was the assumed cause adequate or inadequate? It certainly would have been inadequate to produce the known results, which may be permanently gauged by the literary monuments of the New Testament, had there been any actual flaw in the reality of the life or death of Christ, or any defect in the ostensible proof of His resurrection. But if His life and death were really like what the Epistles, the Gospels, and the Acts, are consistent in representing them to have been, then it becomes the more difficult to call in question the actuality of the resurrection, considering all the circumstances which preceded, attended, and followed it. And the force of these considerations, be it observed, is virtually independent of any extravagant estimate of the character of the Gospels. Taking

them only as affording testimony of the broadest and most general kind, as what they undoubtedly are, the earliest and most authoritative records obtainable concerning the events of which they treat, the weight of these observations, and the strength of the position assumed, remains the same. And the most extreme criticism cannot grudge us this estimate of them. For this is at all events their due, and probably very much more than this is their legitimate right.

More detailed treatment of the other books of the New Testament is not needed here because they do but tend to illustrate and confirm what has been said. Not one of them could have been produced, no matter who the particular author was, but for that total revolution of society and regeneration of human thought which is historically traceable to the life, death, and alleged resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is historically traceable to nothing else. Rightly, therefore, does it seem that we have truth and justice on our side when we point to the mere fact of the existence of the Christian Scriptures as a standing monument and evidence of the Divine Mission of Jesus Christ. And the more the nature of this ground is investigated and tried, the more, we are convinced, will it be found solid, secure, and sound; and the more we shall

be persuaded of the permanent and unalterable validity of the Lord's appeal, whether we regard it as spoken of the Old Testament or the New :  
" Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they that testify of Me."

## PRAYER VIEWED IN RELATION TO NATURAL LAW.

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“After this manner therefore pray ye.”—MATT. vi. 9.

THE subject which I have to bring before you in this discourse is the Christian duty of prayer, for the purpose of vindicating it from the attacks of unbelievers, and pointing out that its practice is in conformity with the principles of the soundest reason. It is obvious that in treating it I must assume that those with whom I am reasoning are believers in the existence of a God who is the moral Governor of the Universe, for it would be absurd to argue that prayer is a duty with professed Atheists, or Pantheists. This is evident, because if any person starts with the assumption that our evidence is insufficient to prove the existence of a God who is a moral being, and not an impersonal force, then the

absurdity of prayer must be conceded; for in that case there would be none to hear, and none to regard.

With respect, therefore, to Pantheists and Atheists, there is only one course open to the Christian, viz. before we attempt to persuade them that prayer is a duty, to place before them the evidence on which we believe in the existence of a personal God, on the principle laid down by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it is necessary that he who approaches to God should believe that He exists and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

First, then, let me clearly state the nature of the views which it is my purpose to controvert in the present discourse. Stated generally they may be expressed in a single sentence. Prayer, according to my opponents, can produce no objective result, but only a subjective one. As, however, this sentence contains two scientific terms, it is necessary that I should translate it into simpler English. The meaning intended is this. Prayer, when it is fervent, may produce beneficial results in ourselves, by calling into active energy various good feelings and affections; but it must be barren of result in effecting change external to ourselves.



This objection rests on one of two principles. The first of them affirms that the Creator has created the matter, and the forces of the universe once for all; and impressed upon them their invariable laws; and that having once created them, and set them in motion, they go on for ever grinding out their results with the precision of a machine, with the action of which He never interferes. This is alleged to be proved by the discoveries of physical science, that the forces, laws, and order of nature are invariable; and have never once been interfered with by any external agent. If this view is correct, it would follow that the idea that prayer can exert such an influence on the Being who made the universe, as to induce Him to interfere with its operations, is a pious folly.

The second is couched in more theistic language. It allows that God is present and immanent in the forces of the universe, and that they are either the result of His energetic action, or the operation of His will. It then falls back on the scientific difficulty above referred to; and adds that the supposition that the Creator has so constructed the universe, as to render any interference with the action of its forces necessary, is equivalent to a denial of the perfection either of His wisdom, or His power. If this

position is true, it follows that prayer must be presumptuous.

But the objection has been placed in a much more striking form before the public by two eminent men of science. It has been proposed to make the efficacy of prayer the subject of a scientific test, in the same manner as the ordinary truths of science are tested, and to stake the whole question on the result. The method proposed, though at first sight extremely plausible, is, when we consider the high scientific attainments of those who have propounded it, one of the crudest character ; for it is in the plainest contradiction to every principle which Science recognizes. It is as follows. Let two hospitals be taken, and let each of them be filled with an equal number of suffering people. Let a large number of Christians concur in offering prayer for the inmates of one, and let no prayer be offered for those of the other : after this has been continued for a sufficient time, let the efficacy of prayer be brought to the scientific test of verification by ascertaining whether the inmates of the hospital for which prayer has been offered, who have recovered, are in such excess compared with those in the other hospital as to warrant the conclusion that prayer has exerted any influence on their recovery.

The answer to this objection is not far to seek, as it obviously involves a flagrant violation of every scientific principle. Scientific tests only produce valid results, when the special conditions of the particular case are complied with; and where this is not the case they are valueless. An illustration will make this clear. A chemical test, which would be accepted as affording legitimate evidence of the presence of a particular substance under certain conditions, would be worthless as a proof of its presence or absence under wholly different ones. This is the line of reasoning which scientific men would certainly pursue in their respective sciences; and if religious men were to affirm that their verifications were valueless because they failed under a wholly different set of conditions, none would be louder in their denunciation of their ignorance and presumption. Yet this is precisely the thing which these eminent men of science have done respecting the Christian doctrine of prayer. Christians affirm that prayer is only efficacious when it is offered under certain conditions. The proposal in question offers to submit its efficacy to the test of verification under circumstances where those conditions are wanting. The following considerations prove this beyond the power of contradiction:—

1. No intelligent Christian believes that prayer will be efficacious unless it is offered in faith, humility, and submission to the will of God. In this view I think that all reverent theists will agree. But a prayer in the spirit of the proposal could not possibly be offered in faith, for both the New Testament and reason alike concur in affirming that it would be tempting God, and a presumptuous sin. It would therefore violate the conditions on which Christians affirm that prayer is efficacious.

2. Christians affirm that prayer only obtains an answer, when it is accompanied with a certain state of heart on the part of the offerer. These conditions are numerous; but it will be sufficient to mention only one of them, which the challenge in question would distinctly violate. The New Testament teaches that no prayer will be heard which contradicts the principles of its moral teaching. But nothing could be a greater violation of them than, if we knew of two hospitals, the inmates of which had an equal claim on our Christian love, to pray for the recovery of those in the one hospital, and leave those in the other destitute of our sympathies. To invite Christians, therefore, to submit the efficacy of the test in question, is as absurd as to insist to apply his tests for the discovery

of antimony, to a mixture from which we have previously removed all traces of its presence.

The error which I have just exposed is certainly a very remarkable one; and when we consider the persons by whom it has been committed, it may appear all but incredible that they should have fallen into it. Most evils, however, have in them some counterbalance of good; and I think that a very useful lesson may be drawn by all of us from the palpable blunder into which these eminent persons have fallen. It is this, that before we enter on the consideration of any question connected with Christianity, we should first inquire what its teaching on the point under discussion really is. It is not too much to affirm, that a considerable number of the attacks of unbelievers are not so much directed against Christianity itself, as against some popular misrepresentation of it. I will therefore endeavour to lay down, as briefly as I am able, what is its teaching respecting God's presence in Providence, and the efficacy of prayer. It will be necessary to consider the former point, for it has a very intimate bearing on the latter.

1. The writers of the Old Testament affirm that God not only exists independently of the universe, but that He is present in it at every point at every moment. Its forces have no existence

independent of Him, but are His energies through which He is constantly operating in it. What we call the laws of nature are the rules by which the Divine action limits itself. I cannot discern that they make any distinction between what we designate ordinary and special providences; for to use its own language, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein." "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also, The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land." The lightnings are the result of His energetic operation. "When the waves of the sea arise, He stills them;" "those who go down to the sea in ships see His works in the deep." He grows the grass; He feeds the animal races which, when He takes away their breath, die and return again to the dust. "Fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy winds, mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowls," fulfil His word. The sending forth of rain to the ends of the earth, and the smiting of the firstborn in Egypt, are equally ascribed to His energetic operation.<sup>1</sup> Nor

<sup>1</sup> In the Psalms no distinction is observed between what we now designate God's ordinary providence and his miraculous working. Both alike are viewed as manifestations

are such views of God's presence in nature confined to Psalmists, in whose mouths they may be said to be poetic descriptions; they underlie the entire structure of the prophetical, and even the prose of the historical and gnostic writings, all of which concur in affirming

of His energetic presence in the universe. Of the manner in which the Psalmists unite together ordinary providences and miracles we have a remarkable example in the 135th Psalm, our modern mode of contemplating the distinction being evidently foreign to the writer's thoughts: "For we know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings for the rain; He bringeth the wind out of His treasures. Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants." Similar views pervade the whole of the Old Testament. It has been objected that its writers were ignorant that God acted in conformity with law. But the writer of the 148th Psalm, after having ascribed all creation to the energetic operation of the divine will, adds, "He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass." So in the 104th Psalm, while its author affirms that all the forces operating in nature are the energies of God, speaking of the waters, he says, "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth." Numberless other passages make it clear that the sacred writers, while they viewed the forces of nature as the energies of God, were fully aware that their action was not conducted at haphazard, but in conformity with law.

God's constant presence in the universe He has created.

But these *views* of nature are not confined to the Old Testament; they are sanctioned by our Blessed Lord. It is true that His teaching seldom led Him directly to refer to these topics. Yet the Gospels make it clear that He recognized throughout nature the universal presence of His Father. According to Him the flowers have received their delicate tints from His operation; He feeds the fowls of the air, and His presence so encircles man that not a single hair falls to the ground without Him, from which He deduces the exhortation that His disciples should not fear in the universe of God.

In striking contrast to the views of God's action in nature which underlie the Sacred Writings, are those propounded by that school of physical philosophy to which I have alluded, that matter and its forces constitute a machine which God has once set in motion, but in the activities of which His presence is no longer manifested. This view is, no doubt, one which is very extensively diffused, so much so, that large numbers of us, even while we theoretically affirm the contrary, fail practically to recognize God's energetic presence in nature, which we are in the habit of viewing as a machine from



the action of which He has retired.<sup>2</sup> It is this theory of the universe which imparts nearly all our difficulties to the subject of prayer; for it is objected that, if God energizes in the universe in conformity with invariable laws, and these laws are the expressions of His will, prayers which ask Him to deviate from the predetermined course of His action must be presumptuous. Before I can meet these objections it is evident that I must lay down what is the teaching of Christianity on the subject of prayer, what kind of petitions it warrants, and under what conditions it affirms that answers will be accorded to them.

<sup>2</sup> The large amount of physical evil in the universe has greatly tended to strengthen the belief that the various operations of nature are carried on by a machinery which acts independently without the direct intervention of God. Such a theory, however, leaves us with respect to the existence of evil much where it finds us, for all that the mechanical theory of force is able to do is to refer its presence to some imperfection in the machine of the universe as it was originally constructed and set in motion by its Creator. By this we really gain nothing, except to remove the difficulty a little further out of sight. It is far wiser candidly to admit that the question of the existence of evil is one which is insoluble with our present faculties. One thing is certain, that the enjoyments of living creatures vastly exceed their pains, and as Mr. Mill has observed, suffering is not produced by a separate machinery, but by the same that produces our enjoyments.

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I. Prayer according to the New Testament is a state of mind, far more extensive than that which prompts men to offer up petitions to God for special interferences with His providential government. In reality, this forms but a very small portion of the Christian duty. On the contrary, prayer includes all those mental acts by which the spirit of man holds communion with its Creator. As such it embraces thanksgiving for the mercies we have received, adoration of His power, wisdom, and His glorious moral perfections; the pouring out of the soul before Him in penitence for the imperfections of our duties, and the expression of devoted self-consecration to His service. All this can take place without the offering to Him one single petition, which involves an interference with the laws, or order of nature; and every Christian, who has transferred the teaching of the Bible into his heart, instinctively feels, that this forms the most important portion of the duty of prayer, which may be expressed in a single sentence—communion with God. Such a state of mind is the complete realization of the full meaning of the apostolic precept, "Pray without ceasing." Of this character must have been a large portion of the prayers of our Divine Master, when the evangelists describe Him as spending whole

nights in prayer to God. These prayers must have largely consisted of communings of His human spirit with His Father, in expressions of trust, adoration, and love. To suppose that He spent whole nights in offering nothing but petitions, would be inconsistent with the warning which He Himself has given in the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, not "to use vain repetitions as the heathen do." Prayer, then, viewed in this, its most important aspect, consists in communion of the human spirit with its Creator.

I need not stop to defend this aspect of prayer from the objections of unbelief, because it is clear that none can be valid against it except on the principles of Atheism or Pantheism. No theist, who believes that a God exists who is the moral Governor of the Universe, can dispute that it is the duty of the creature to hold communion with its Maker, and that its inability to do so, proves that its whole moral being must be out of harmony with the moral character of God.

II. Christianity also teaches that an important portion of the duty of prayer consists in the offering up petitions to God for the various mercies of which we stand in need. Let it be observed that these consist of two kinds—First, petitions which respect matters purely spiritual and moral; secondly, such as may in-

volve modifications in the action of the laws of the material universe. The first, in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, is by far the most important portion of the duty of prayer. If we examine the references to it which are contained in its pages we shall find that a vast majority of the petitions which they contain were offered for spiritual mercies; such as the pardon of sins, the increase of different graces, the imparting of spiritual strength to enable the Christian successfully to struggle against temptation, and for grace to bring his desires into conformity with the will of God.<sup>3</sup> Of the greater proportion which such prayers bear in the teaching of Christianity to those for temporal mercies, the Lord's Prayer, which is

<sup>3</sup> Of this the prayers of St. Paul, as they are recorded in his Epistles, are notable examples. "For this cause," says he, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," &c.—Eph. iii. 14, &c. So he writes to the Colossians,—“I cease not to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,” &c.—Col. i. 9, &c. “I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Brethren, pray for us.”—1 Thess. v. 23. And so everywhere.

expressly propounded as a model for our own, is a striking example. It consists, as you know, of six petitions, with an introductory act of adoration. Of these one only, "Give us this day our daily bread," can be viewed as a supplication for temporal mercies. But if the explanation which our Catechism gives of it is correct, it was not intended to be a mere request for temporal mercies, but a supplication that it would please God to "Give us all things needful for our souls and bodies." Consequently it reduces our requests for things which involve special interventions with the forces of nature to half of a petition ; or, in other words, it teaches that such prayers ought not to exceed one in twelve, which is somewhere about the proportion in which they are found in the New Testament and in the Liturgy of our Church.

Now, to prayers which ask of God such spiritual benefits as I have described no consistent theist can object. To give an objection against them the shadow of validity, it would be necessary to prove that the laws of the physical universe dominate in the moral world. But of this it is not too much to say that, while a certain school of modern scientists have directed their utmost efforts to prove it, they have utterly failed in the attempt. What is still more im-

portant ; not only have all past efforts proved a failure, but all those which are based on similar principles certainly must fail for evermore, because no process of logical reasoning can equal in cogency those certitudes which are derived from the primary intuitions of the human mind. Among these is the direct consciousness of the freedom of our actions. Against this the conclusions of that remorseless logic, which labours to prove that our actions are the mere results of necessary forces, such as dominate in the material universe, will be impotent ; and men will continue to believe that they are free agents, because they are directly conscious that they are so.

But if man is a free agent we infer that that God who made him must be so likewise. This being so, it follows that God does not act in uniformity with a law of necessity in the moral and spiritual worlds ; and consequently, that petitions offered up to Him by these moral and spiritual beings, whom He has created free agents, for these spiritual and moral supports, which they stand in need of, may be heard and answered by that God who is a moral and spiritual Being. God and man therefore being alike moral beings, they must be capable of holding communion with each other ; and as God is a perfect and

man an imperfect one, the imperfect moral being has a right to look up to the perfect one for aid in the struggles in the midst of which he has been placed. Consequently prayer, as far as it consists in the offering of petitions for spiritual and moral strength, is not only perfectly rational, but it is equally rational to expect that it will prove acceptable to that perfect moral Being who, while He has made man an imperfect one, intends him, by the state of moral discipline in which he has been placed, to progress nearer and nearer towards perfection.

III. The next aspect of prayer as it is presented to us in the New Testament embraces the offering of petitions for temporal mercies. This brings us face to face with the alleged scientific difficulty. Against such prayers it has been objected that answers to them would involve the necessity of constant interferences with the laws by which the universe is governed; and that not only has past scientific investigation failed to detect any instance of such interference, but also that the validity of scientific methods depends on the assumption that they never have taken place in the past, nor will happen in the future. Consequently it has been affirmed that such prayers are a presumptuous attempt at interference with God's providential

government, and that it is a mere delusion to believe that any answer will be vouchsafed to them. This objection, if valid, applies not only to prayer but to all special providences, and pre-eminently to miracles. Before I answer it, it will be necessary that I should point out how far petitions asking for special interferences with the order of the universe are justified by the teaching of the New Testament.

I have already observed, that if we take the various prayers which are recorded in its pages, as our model, the number of petitions which it justifies us in offering for temporal mercies, is extremely few, compared with those which we are exhorted to offer for spiritual ones. Its teaching affirms that the general course of God's providence is directed in such a manner as to secure the best interests of holy men; and that they need not fear in the universe of their Father, the events of which He controls and governs. Doubtless it contains promises of answers to prayer of the most absolute description, as for instance, when our Lord says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." But it must never be forgotten that it likewise contains a considerable number of moral precepts which are expressed in equally absolute terms, as, for



example, "Give to him that asketh of thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." Such precepts were never intended to be literal rules of conduct, for if they were acted on in the letter, and not in the spirit, they would be destructive of society; but to be the enunciations of great principles, which were to be carried out under the guidance of that sound discretion which we designate common sense. What is applicable to moral precepts of this description, must be equally so to general promises made of answers to prayer; i. e. they must be understood with certain obvious restrictions. What they are can only be learned from the New Testament itself.

Petitions for temporal mercies, as they are set forth in its pages, are almost invariably confined to supplications that God will direct the general course of His providence for our good, without asking it to be done in this or that particular way. Such is the petition in our Lord's Prayer already referred to, to which the prayer in our litany, "That it may please Thee to preserve for our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in due time we may enjoy them," almost precisely corresponds. In a similar manner St. Paul tells us that he was in the habit of praying that he might have a favour-

able journey, by the will of God, to visit the Roman Christians. Elsewhere he asks the prayers of the Church that he might be delivered from those who did not believe, in Judæa. Similar prayers are scattered up and down his writings, but we find him uttering no special prayer as to the particular mode in which his requests were to be brought about. The whole history makes it plain that his habit was to trust to the ordinary course of God's providence in his apostolic journeys, and not to expect special interventions in his favour. The long list of dangers which he encountered, as described in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, proves that he had no exemption from the ordinary ones incident to travellers.<sup>4</sup> The Acts of the Apostles inform us that he took such precautions to avoid them, as were sug-

<sup>4</sup> Thus he tells us that, in his apostolic journeys, he encountered perils of waters, perils of robbers, perils by his own countrymen, perils by the heathen, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils on the sea, perils among false brethren; and that he was exposed to the ordinary contingencies of weariness and painfulness, of deprivation of sleep, of hunger and thirst, of want of food, cold and nakedness. Yet, while the Epistles inform us that it was his habitual practice to place himself in prayer under the divine protection, . . . they afford a single hint that he prayed that he might have exemption from these evils by what are called special interventions of Providence.

gested by prudence.\* Only one prayer for a special intervention is referred to in his epistles, that "the thorn in the flesh," which seems to have been a special form of bodily weakness, probably a disease of the eyes, might depart from him. This petition, however, was refused; but the refusal was accompanied with the assurance of Christ that His grace would be sufficient for him.

These and numerous other passages contained in the New Testament justify the inference that petitions for temporal blessings should take the form of requests that God would direct the course of His providence in such a manner, as to bring about the good of which we stand in need; but its teaching affords little warrant for making requests that He will bring it about in the specific form which may seem desirable to us.<sup>6</sup> When such requests were

\* See Acts ix. 25; xvi. 37; xvii. 10; xix. 30, 31; xxi. 20—27; xxii. 24—29; xxiii. 6, 7, 16, &c.; xxvii. 22—26. 30. 32.

<sup>6</sup> I have made these observations because a habit prevails among many of asking God to make special interventions of His providence in their favour, not a few of which involve direct interferences with the mode of His action in nature. Of these considerable numbers of those referred to by Mr. Muller in connexion with his Orphan Asylum form a remarkable example. He believes that this institution is supported solely by the power of faith and prayer, without the use of the ordinary means which are adopted by other

presented even by apostles, they were not unfrequently refused. So it happened with St. Paul's prayer above referred to, that he might have a *prosperous journey* to visit Rome. The visit was brought about in the course of God's providence; but the prayer that the journey might be a prosperous one, was refused; for not only did the apostle visit it as a prisoner, but in the course of his voyage he suffered shipwreck, in which he incurred the greatest hazard of his life.

But the New Testament contains a far higher example, the prayer of our divine Master in His agony. His first petition was, that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him. "Nevertheless," adds He, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that this prayer was heard; but as we learn from the event, and the second petition, not in the cup of suffering passing from Him, but in the increase of His perfect submission to the divine will, to drink it to the dregs.

Such facts establish a most important principle with respect to prayers, the answers to

religious societies for raising funds. For prayers of this kind I can find no warrant in the New Testament, and they are in striking contradiction to the Pauline practice.

which involve deviations from the ordinary mode of the divine acting in Providence, that although we may feel the utmost certitude that God will direct the course of events for our good, the specific form of our requests may not be complied with. Petitions of this kind ought invariably to be offered with a deep sense of our own ignorance of what is best for us, and the humblest submission to the divine will; and even with the request that if they are not in conformity with His will He will refuse them, however desirable they may seem to us. This caution requires to be steadily kept in view in the controversy respecting prayer, because a number of popular exaggerations are prevalent respecting it which shock thoughtful men by their irreverence, being little short of intrusions into the Council-Chamber of the Most High, to advise Him better as to how He should order the course of His providential government. It cannot be too strongly borne in mind that it is a very solemn thing to ask God to make special interventions in our favour; and if done at all it ought to be in a spirit of the profoundest humility, under the deep feeling that our ignorance of what is on the whole best for ourselves and for others is supreme. This is so great that different persons may entertain different views

as to what is best; and in rashly offering requests of this description there is no little danger that one in his blindness may ask of God one thing, and another the direct contrary.

The following will express briefly the teaching of the New Testament on this subject. When we seek temporal mercies at the hands of God our requests ought to be couched in the general form of the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," without entering into details of the manner in which God is to intervene. When we have thus laid our necessities before Him it becomes our duty, in the fulness of holy trust, to commit ourselves into the hands of our Heavenly Father, out of whose guardian care we cannot pass.

One point more requires a brief notice. If God is the moral Governor of the world, His government must be directed to the realization of moral ends. If this be so (and I think that no reverent theist, certainly no Christian, will dispute it), His providential dispensations, must be accommodated to the moral condition of His creatures with a view to their probation and improvement. Consequently, repentance on the part of man, may produce a corresponding modification in the government of God. In taking this view of the subject, however, it behoves us

to act with the utmost caution, because our Lord's teaching is express, that it very frequently happens that human suffering is not the direct result of the sin of those who suffer; and that suffering serves other purposes than punishment in the universe of God. We have no right therefore to infer, because a calamity occurs, that it is a direct infliction for a particular sin.

These observations will aid us in clearing away many of the difficulties with which this subject has been surrounded. They make it clear that the Christian doctrine of prayer does not involve those kinds of interferences with the order of the universe, which objectors urge against it. All that it requires is, the energetic presence of God in the universe, directing and controlling its forces in such a manner, as to effect the realization of His purposes. His doing so contradicts no known scientific truth, nor is it irrational to believe that its moral Governor habitually regulates its forces for the realization of the purposes of His moral government. Still further, the Christian doctrine of prayer involves no violation, or even suspension of the laws of nature, as far as scientific research has succeeded in ascertaining them. On those points I observe :—That the Scriptural doctrine of the immanence of God in the universe, and of its various

forces being the manifestations of His constant energy, is far more in accordance with reason, than any of the theories which have been propounded by unbelief. We are in fact unable to form any ultimate conception of force, except as the result of the action of will. The idea has been derived from the conscious action of our own wills; and thence it has been applied by analogy to what we designate the forces of the universe. These, according to the Atheistic and Pantheistic conceptions of them, are blind, devoid alike of intelligence and volition; they have existed from eternity and will go on throughout eternity, evolving results with the precision of a piece of mechanism. This theory, however, leaves us devoid of any account of their origin which will endure the test of a rational investigation. But the Scriptural view of them as the energies of the Creator ever present in His works, gives us an account of their origin which satisfies the demands of reason.

This being so, it follows that if the forces of nature are manifestations of the energies of God, their action must be the result of His intelligence directed to effectuate the purposes of His will. Whatever therefore His intelligence suggests, that must be the course of His action, which must be free alike from the trammels of



blind fate, or necessary law. If this, then, is the correct view of God's presence in the universe, the expression, which we are so frequently in the habit of using, that He interferes with the action of its forces, is inaccurate and misleading. On the contrary He is ever present, and energizing in them. An interference is only an accurate account of the action of one, who has set a piece of machinery in motion, from the superintendence of which He has retired, and has subsequently interposed for its rectification.

But if God is ever present in the universe, and if the action of its forces is the expression of His intelligent volition, it is inaccurate to say that He interferes with them, because He is always present in them, and energizing in them. The objection against answers to prayer because they involve a constant interference with the order of His providential government, and therefore are unworthy of His wisdom, falls to the ground.

From these considerations it follows that the question of the possibility of receiving answers to prayer resolves itself into whether it is consistent with God's moral government to answer the petitions which we offer. When we consider that His moral government is exercised over finite moral agents for their discipline and

improvement, it is strictly in conformity with reason that He should answer such prayers as are offered up in conformity with His will; and Christianity gives us the assurance of an express revelation that He will do so.

IV. But the objection takes another form. It affirms that experience proves that God energizes in the universe in conformity with invariable laws; and that the Christian doctrine of prayer presupposes, if He answers the petitions addressed to Him, that He must violate the order of His providential Government, and cease to act in conformity with law; or, in other words, that answers to prayer involve a suspension of the forces of nature, and a violation of its laws. This objection denies not only the possibility of answers to prayer, but of miracles.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I have discussed the entire question as it bears on miracles, in the second Supplement of my first Bampton Lecture. It is true that the observations there made were not written with any direct reference to the subject of prayer, but exclusively for the purpose of freeing the subject of miracles from a number of difficulties in which it has been needlessly involved. But the principles which are applicable to miracles are equally so to objections against prayer, on the ground that answers to it involve a succession of fitful Divine interferences with the order of nature. If, therefore, any of my readers wishes to see this question more fully entered into, I must refer him to the Supplement in question.

In reply to it, I observe that it is an error to assume that either the one or the other necessarily involves either a suspension of the forces, or a violation of the order of nature. The difficulty owes its plausibility to our failure to recognize God's presence in nature, habitually energizing in it, and directing its forces by His intelligence for the effectuation of His purposes. If the Scriptural doctrine on this point is true, there is no difficulty in His affording answers to prayer without His suspending a single one of what we designate the forces of nature, or interfering with the law of their action. It is an indisputable fact that man, by the agency of his intelligent volition, combines, and directs these forces every day, whereby he brings about results wholly different from those which would have taken place, except for such combination and direction. An effect of this kind takes place every time I move my pen in writing this discourse, whereby under the guidance of my intelligent volition, a result is brought about wholly different from that which would have ensued, except for such intervention. Yet this takes place without the smallest suspension of the forces, or violation of the order of nature. Look on the world around you ; and you will see everywhere, in numbers passing all powers of nume-

ration, results quite different from those which would have taken place, if man had not interposed to combine, regulate, and control the action of the forces of nature by the intelligent action of his will. Yet all this has been brought about without a single breach of what men of science recognize as a natural law. What then is the inevitable conclusion? Surely that what is possible to man must be possible to God. If therefore, man is able to effectuate results such as we daily behold him bringing about, without a single interruption of the invariability of natural laws, there can be no limits to those which God is able to effect in a similar manner, in proportion as He is mightier and wiser. We may not be able to trace the mode of His operation, but that is nothing to the purpose. A simple illustration will make this clear. It is certain that the lower animals possess a limited amount of intelligence; yet to them it must be utterly incomprehensible how man can bring about the results which he does, without interrupting what according to their limited conceptions, must be the only order of nature with which they are acquainted. Yet all his wonderful actions, which to them must bear the same appearance which miracles would to us, are as matter of fact brought about, simply by combining and

imparting a different direction to the forces of nature, through the agency of intelligence. If this be so, as the interval which separates the intelligence of man from that of God, must be inconceivably greater than that which separates the intelligence of the lower animals from that of man, proportionably greater must be His means of effecting all the results which answers to prayer require, without any violation of the laws, forces, or order of the universe. Further, if man frequently effects results of this kind in answer to the petition of a brother man (which he unquestionably does), why may not God do the same to meet the circumstances of those who love Him; and in answer to their supplications, when they are offered up in conformity with His will?

One further point requires notice. A large number of the prayers for such temporal blessings as the teaching of the New Testament justifies us in presenting to God, can be answered without any interference whatever with the laws of the material universe, or with the operation of its forces, by the simple action of mind on mind. No small amount of the blessings which we require can be brought about only through the agency of man. Will any one affirm that God cannot act on human minds

either directly, or by an intermediate agency? The assertion that He thus acts, contradicts no known scientific truth; and if He can act in this manner, He has abundance of means of answering those prayers, which are addressed to Him as to a gracious Father, without interfering with either the laws or the forces through which He acts in the material universe. Before it can be shown that such a mode of the divine acting is irrational, it must be first proved that both God and man are not moral agents, but blind and necessary forces.

It has been asserted that if God is ever present operating in Providence, and at the same time man's gracious Father, His benevolence will lead Him to give him everything that is good, without the necessity on our part of offering Him petitions that He will do so. I answer this by asking a very simple question, How do we know that it may not be His pleasure, that we should ask Him for those mercies which we require? One moral benefit evidently arises from His doing so rather than from His granting them unasked. It makes us more sensible of our dependence on God; and keeps us from that state of mind into which we are too apt to fall, viz. that of thinking that mercies which we continually receive without

any effort of our own, come of themselves, instead of descending from the gracious Author of all good. It is therefore no disparagement to the teaching of Christianity that it affirms such to be His pleasure.

In conclusion, the consideration of this subject strongly urges on us a more habitual recognition of God's presence in the universe which He has created, and of the fact that He is always energizing in and directing its forces in such a manner as will certainly accomplish the purposes of His holy pleasure. He, in the words of the Psalmists, is the ever-present God, who compasseth our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways; who besets us behind and before, and lays His hands upon us; who is ever present in His works, energizing by the greatness of His power; who is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand; for in heaven we shall find Him there, in the grave we shall find Him there; and out of His keeping we cannot pass. Let us therefore with all prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and submission, cast all our cares on Him, who cares for us, in the full assurance that the Father of mercies, who has delivered up His own Son for us all, will freely give everything which is really good in answer to

the prayers of those that love Him, and call upon Him in truth, always remembering that His ways are in the sea; and His paths are in the great waters, and although we can discern portions of them, yet there is no searching of the depths of His understanding.

THE END.



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